



The Barbful Way





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The
BASHFUL MAN
and Others by
Charles Pierce Burton

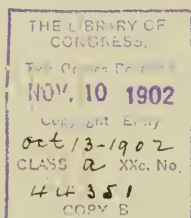


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TO MY WIFE
CORA VREELAND BURTON

THE BASHFUL MAN

I WOULD like to say a word for that waif of humanity known as the bashful man. Some one must speak for him or he will never be heard, and why not one who has long borne that peculiar relation to society which falls to the exclusive lot of the bashful? Just why some men are more bashful than others is hard to explain. But Nature certainly discriminates against many of her children in a marked degree. They come into the world blushing and never get over it. There is nothing which makes a man look so foolish as to blush. That which is fascinating in woman in him looks idiotic. Especially as he is sure to blush at the wrong time, turn a brazen face to that which should send rivers of blood to his cheeks and grow crimson without the slightest provocation.

The bashful man is handicapped from the time he leaves his mother's arms until he is encircled in those tender, waiting arms of Mother Nature. The over-modest man is a spectator in mundane affairs. He hangs apologetically in the skirts of society, longing to break away from his thralldom but unable to do so. Many and many a time he resolves to go ahead and do as others do, but his fatal disposition holds him back. Yet, strange to say, bashfulness is often the first indication of dawning intelligence in humanity. When baby hangs his head and refuses to tell what doggie says, there is hope for that child. It sometimes takes wisdom to be afraid. But when a man, ever conscious of his limitations and acutely alive to the geographical position of his feet, is silent

among men and evades the gaze of women, he is looked upon askance and regarded as cold and haughty.

Poor fellow! In his heart of hearts he knows there is a love for all humanity struggling for expression. He resolves that he will overcome this defect and plunge into the seething vortex of society. He actually goes to the church sociable, deliberately setting himself afloat on this sea of dissipation. He thinks he will get away from himself and delight the whole company with his brilliancy and good fellowship. The door opens. Where now is his cherished bravado? He sees familiar faces along with the strange but his feet are glued to the floor. He wonders what he can do with his hands and earnestly longs for the quiet of his own room with a good book for company.

As he stands there awkwardly where he entered, a wave seizes him and washes him across to the other side of the room where he remains during the rest of the evening, from time to time assuring the anxious hostess that he is enjoying himself hugely. He always takes his fun that way in homeopathic doses. He sees with envious eyes his friend surrounded by a group of laughing and admiring ladies. O were he that friend! There! An opening presents itself! With a feeling of suffocation about his heart, conscious that all eyes are upon him he approaches a beautiful creature and informs her that it is a delightful evening. Then silence ensues—a painful silence and he flees. Once in the dressing-room with his overcoat on his arm, what brilliant things he might have said, come to him unsought! He walks home alone and wonders if any one will

ever love him. Love him? How little he knows the heart of woman! Any man can get a wife, and I sometimes think that the meaner the rascal, the better the wife he manages to find.

There is no accounting for bashfulness and apparently no cure for it. Time and struggle enable him to overcome it in a degree and deceive his friends, but he can never deceive himself. I have seen a bashful young man walk four times around the block before he could bring himself to ring the bell, knowing all the time she would be glad to see him. I have known ministers of the gospel to do the same thing and suffer agony of spirit before making a pastoral call. I have known men too bashful to flee from a woman and suffer greatly not knowing how to break away.

But she is seldom bashful. Bashful womanhood is something of a myth. Mind, I do not say there is no such thing as maidenly modesty. Neither are all men bashful. But let the average man find himself alone in a company of strange women, he suddenly becomes timid as a fawn. Reason tells him in unmistakable language to flee. Pride bids him stay. This is not the first victory pride has gained over reason.

Who is the bashful one at a wedding? Tell me, you who have lived through the marriage service or have listened to the strains of Lohengrin from a front seat. Is it the sweet young bride, with a soft color in her cheeks and a glad light in her eyes? Or is it that perturbed youth at her side, that shy, shrinking creature with his heart in his mouth and his knees knocking together like castanets? The clergyman

can hardly hear what response he makes to the all important question and takes much on faith. But listen to her voice, low but clear, distinct, audible throughout the room. Ah, were he not so badly "rattled," that tone would fill him with vague alarm, entirely discrediting the conventional promise to love and obey.

Therefore I say be kind to the bashful man. If the great law of compensation holds good, some time, somewhere there will be a great reckoning. He may hesitate, perhaps, at the grave and linger modestly outside the pearly gates until St. Peter sees him. Then, I am sure, that impetuous but just saint will throw open wide the portals, grasp him by the hand and lead him into the midst of Paradise.

ON BEING A MISFIT

THERE comes to nearly every one, at times, a feeling that he is a misfit. And a melancholy conviction it is. Nature must have developed him out of various remnants which she happened to have on hand — good enough, perhaps, as far as they went, but they did not go far enough. She ran out of material in every direction. Even that which he can do the best, there seems to be no opportunity for doing. His finer aspirations must be smothered or held in check by the necessities of existence. The times are out of joint and he seems an alien among his fellows. The books which other people are reading and raving over, he has not read and does not want to. He does not care for Browning, except an occasional, homeopathic dose, and Browning being one of the world's great facts, he worries about it. Even Kipling does not attract him altogether. Privately, although it is not popular to say so, he regards much of this famous author's recent work as a series of literary gymnastics, to be admired for their potentialities rather than their art.

This misfit is ready to acknowledge the genius of these writers and the greatness of Shakespeare, but — and here is where he bitterly bewails his shortcomings — he actually does not care to read the immortal plays, save now and then some glorious passage. He would far rather weep over Eugene Field's "Little Boy Blue" than the misfortunes of Lear. Best of all, he would lie down in the clover with James Whitcomb Riley, "Knee deep in June,"

and—

“keerlessly

Sprawl out len'thways on the grass
Where the shadders thick and soft
As the kivers on the bed
Mother fixes in the loft
Allus, when they 's company.”

Worse yet, as if all these weaknesses were not bad enough, although it will not do to own it, a street piano—a common, ordinary street piano—sets every nerve in his body tingling. How he enjoys a street piano! He tries not to show it, but in spite of himself smiles light up the gloom of his countenance, the color rushes to his cheeks and he walks with the elastic step of youth. Poor misfit! That is not music. “Little Boy Blue,” whose great tragedy so many aching hearts have lived, may not survive a century, while Shakespeare seems destined to live a thousand years.

He wonders if any one really enjoys reading the horrors of Lear and Hamlet and the rest of those monumental plays which so defy the ravages of time from Scene First to *exeunt omnes* in the last act, usually by sword or poison. He never tires of the grand soliloquies, of Hamlet's subtleties, of Touchstone's quaint humor and philosophy, of Anthony's eloquence. Ah, that is different. The misfit sometimes wonders if all these people who are making analytical studies of such colossal works, dwelling laboriously on the hidden meaning of this word and that and reading into the lines much of which the distinguished author probably never dreamed, are not a little given to fad-ism, and if they do not, when it is all over, sink into some favorite chair

at home and revel in "The Old Swimmin' Hole" and "Jes 'Fore Christmas" which do not mean anything in particular, only speak to the heart from which comes the best that is in us all. And while he reasons and wonders, the thought strikes him with overwhelming force that notwithstanding his own comparative indifference, Shakespeare is attracting more attention in the world today than he has in three hundred years and that critical studies of his writings form a literature in themselves which would require a life time to master.

I fear there are many who do not enjoy gymnastics in art, whether in literature or music. Most of us are plain, ordinary people who love melody. We admire the skill by which the *prima donna* goes through her many vocal contortions; but the melody of the street music quickens the pulse and a bit of "rag time" sets the feet in motion. Cheer up, misfit though you be, there are others. Ordinary people have a large part in life, and there is room for talent as well as genius. The great mountain peaks, looking down upon us through the centuries, awe us with their majesty and inspire us with their grandeur, but they are far away and can be approached only through toil and fatigue. Among the foothills which they love and understand, smiling up at the blue, filling the heart with their melody, their beauty and truth, and leading up unconsciously to the majestic heights beyond, dwell a great multitude.

CARVING

THE unwelcome conviction is gradually forcing itself upon me that girls are getting a little the best of the training, which, if true, all must admit is an unfortunate state of affairs. Possibly this arises from the fact that most of the training falls upon the women of the community whose minds naturally appreciate the needs of their sex. However that may be, we find here and there, schools and kitchen-gardens for girls. Maidens are shown how to perform the rudiments of housekeeping — to wash dishes, set and serve the table, make the beds. They are trained in the art of building fires, which is certainly a matter of great importance to the future husbands of the country; are taught to cook various dishes and to roast meat.

The value of all these accomplishments can not be questioned. They are foundation stones in our elaborate social structure. The morals, the very civilization, perhaps the sanity, of the community are largely dependent on them. I would not have this solicitude for girls abated one jot or tittle. Give them all the preliminary training in housekeeping possible. But how about the boys? Is any one teaching them to carve that roast or turkey after it comes steaming from the household laboratory? This is no matter for trifling. Far from it. It is serious in the extreme, as many a man and woman will bear witness. For, say what you will, carving plays an important part in society. Much discomfiture and many a heart-ache, yes, and stomach-ache as well, is in store for that boy and his friends, if he is

permitted to grow to maturity without having learned to carve.

The time will surely come when he will be confronted with the perplexing problem, how to dissect the turkey, how to properly carve the roast. Such a moment is one of the most critical in a man's career. The guests, who have long been saving up their appetites for the occasion, are at last seated at the table. The roast turkey, a pile of plates and a dozen or more hungry looks confront this pitiable ignoramus. The head of the house—his wife, poor soul—looks anxious, as well she may; but he is a man, made of sterner stuff; he assumes a calmness born of desperation. While anxiously scrutinizing the steaming platter to discover whether it contains fish, fowl or flesh, and on which end he should begin operations, a happy idea seizes him. He calls for the steel and with a series of muscular strokes proceeds to take off what little edge the blade possessed. It is strange what a feeling of importance and confidence is engendered by the simple act of sharpening a knife—a feeling out of all proportion to the result attained. With perspiration starting from every pore, he throws one quick, nervous glance at the flushed cheeks of his wife; yet strong to the last, wearing the look of one who has long been accustomed to carve for a livelihood, he prepares for the onslaught. The supreme moment of his life has arrived. For untold ages the universe has been working up to this point. Painful is the ensuing struggle, and the Recording Angel drops a tear. The guests talk of other matters and try to look unconcerned, but they are alive to every con-

tortion, and the poor fellow knows it.

Of what avail is ordinary education on occasions like this? Lawyers, poets, statesmen, scholars, alike are helpless in presence of this crisis. He may be abundantly able to calculate the distance of the nearest star or to find the corner stone of a city lot; but where is the mathematical formula by which he can determine the exact construction of a roast fowl? He may understand Browning, science may be as an open book, he may be able to trace the evolution of the steaming bird from the primordial unit to the dinner table. In vain! Under excitement of battle men have faced almost certain death with less anxiety than he feels in the presence of that inoffensive fowl. At last he hacks off a leg and separates the joint. If he could only take the thing out back of the barn and put his foot on it! He tries to joke as he removes several savory slices from the table cloth. But all the time his appetite is constantly waning and that of the guests growing more keen. With flushed cheeks, trembling arms, and a tired feeling he finally serves the last plate, his own, with the despised neck, and giving a mental sigh of relief sinks into a less strained position, only to discover that several of the plates first supplied are about empty. But the worst is over. The guests are having a good time. Jokes fly thick and fast, and under cover of the general merriment and goodfellowship, he gradually recovers his mental equilibrium.

Hence, I say, let us not neglect the boys. It is well enough to train the girls; they need it. But if you would confer a blessed boon on humanity, teach

the boys to carve; they will be a pleasure to themselves and friends. All such harrowing experiences will be turned to joy. The carving knife is mightier than the sword, and the man who goeth forth to the feast, proud in the consciousness that he can carve a turkey in dactylic hexameter measure is a person to be envied. What shall we say of the man to whom carving for company is merely an incident in the daily routine? What shall we say of that wonderful being who can carve and tell a good story at the same time? Such men actually exist. Their name is not legion, it is true; but they dwell among us and seldom if ever give themselves airs over this accomplishment. Yet is it not a remarkable accomplishment? To carve well is a great thing; few can do it. To tell a good story is perhaps greater. But to carve and tell a story at the same time! To what heights does not mankind sometimes attain! I know such a man. He moves among his fellow citizens like common humanity. Dignity, wealth, learning — all are his; I envy them not. But when he carves, I take off my hat and prostrate myself at his feet. Friends forget their hunger in watching the poetry of his movements; and as a crowning glory, one which sets him apart from ordinary mortals, he can carve and tell a story at one and the same time.

AFTER DINNER SPEAKING

IT has been claimed with some show of truth that men more than women love a "good dinner" and it may be said without much fear of contradiction that men enjoy no form of entertainment more than a good dinner with all that the word implies. Women, to be sure, like to play at eating, to toy daintily with wafers and kisses, but more as a stimulus to sociability than from any inherent virtue in the art itself. No man would be content with such frivolities. When a hostess desires to please him she prepares something more substantial. But we must not lose sight of the chief part of the dinner, the good fellowship, and especially must we not forget that modern product of culture known as the after-dinner speech. Whatever may be urged for or against after-dinner oratory, no social function, where intelligent men gather around the banquet table, is complete without it, and, whoever else is present, the unfortunate persons who are on the program for speeches are the guests of honor.

I say unfortunate persons, for surely it is a misfortune to feel that you are soon to be called upon to entertain a company. Try as he may, the ordinary man cannot escape from the horror of it. In vain he trifles with the good things on his plate, assuming a careless, unconscious air, or pretends to be absorbed in the conversation of his neighbors; there is a far away look in his eyes which tells a different story of inward perturbation. He wishes that his neighbor was in the bottom of the river, or, at least, that he would attend strictly to the business

in hand and let him have a few minutes to collect his rapidly scattering senses. To heighten the illusion he laughs loudly at every joke that strays his way, in a strained, metallic voice which startles himself. Even if he be one of those rare mortals whose mental serenity is not disturbed by a little thing like making a speech, the consciousness is ever before him that if he is to do justice to himself or his friends he must not eat. No matter how hungry he may be or how appetizing the viands, he must only dally with the food. Of what use is a banquet if one must dally? The brain is an exacting organ and demands undivided attention from the circulatory system. If it is obliged to share and share alike with the stomach neither will do its full duty. Other animals sleep after dining instead of making speeches. Many a speaker finds that his hands are cold and clammy after an oratorical effort, showing that the brain demands the full blood supply. Oliver Wendell Holmes had evidently experienced something similar, for he declared it to be a good sign if a writer works with heated brain and cold feet. Some well meaning persons contend that the custom of after-dinner speaking is more ruinous to digestion than pie. Demosthenes used to talk successfully, when no one was around but the ocean, with a pebble in his mouth. But even the great Athenian must have shrunk from the task had he been asked to address the populace, with ice cream and four kinds of cake in his stomach.

At last the fateful moment arrives; the poor victim of misplaced confidence hears his name called by the toast master and with a feeble attempt to

smile struggles to his feet. The company shove their chairs noisily back and around to get a better view of his agony. The speaker nearly always begins by telling what a pleasure it is to address such an intelligent audience. Poor liar! He is trembling in every limb; at sound of his own voice he breaks out in cold perspiration. His hands feel like chunks of ice and a haze forms before his eyes. He clears his throat, gropes around blindly and with infinite relief lays hold of the back of his chair. Ah, a friend in need is a staunch chair back, tried and true! Here, at least, is something tangible to be clung to at all hazard. And he does cling to it, moving it occasionally with both hands to make sure he is alive. After a little, the haze begins to clear and he thinks he can see a bored look on the faces of the assembled guests. He makes a feeble attempt at a joke and subsides, while a wild burst of applause tells of the joy of the listeners that he has finished. Now a strange phenomenon presents itself. Immediately, a host of ideas, brilliant in conception and coloring, wonderful jokes which would have brought down the house, could they have been uttered, flash through his brain. Too late! Too late! The orchestra is playing and the company is resting at ease, preparatory to the next speech. But a great burden is rolled from his mind. He becomes almost hilarious with the reaction which follows, can even watch the struggles of the succeeding speakers with pitying complacency. Finally, he accepts the congratulations of friends as a matter of course, with an air which plainly says, "Pshaw, it was nothing; I could have done much better if I had been

given more time."

If the average after-dinner speech was what it should be, we could afford to sacrifice the individual for the general good of the company. Such sacrifice seems to be the law of life. To feel at peace with all the world and listen to a bright and brief after-dinner talk is unquestionably a great pleasure. But what shall be said of the weighty and labored discourses which usually follow a feast? A heavy speech on top of a heavy dinner is too much; it cannot be appreciated. No one desires instruction at such a moment. Witness the relief when a speaker contents himself with talking nonsense. The company snatches at the faintest suggestion of a joke as drowning persons at a straw, laughing inordinately whenever there is possible excuse. The ideal after-dinner speech is to entertain, not to instruct. It should be like some delicate dessert — a great deal of flavor and very little substance, and it should be brief. There ought to be some punishment laid down in the penal code for a man who, having been asked to speak five minutes, consumes fifteen in a labored attempt to kill time. The practice of impromptu toasts should be discouraged. No man living can say anything worth hearing without preparation. An unprepared talk is invariably too long. Condensation requires time. These brilliant impromptu speakers possibly keep an assorted lot of speeches on hand which they can work off on an unsuspecting public. The subject makes no difference. That is one of the beauties of an after-dinner speech. If a person is asked to toast the north pole, he can with perfect propriety swing around

to the equator and will be forgiven if he discusses religion or politics. Yet, though oftentimes stupid and long drawn out, we would not part with the after-dinner speech. Far better that we curtail the substantials of the meal and give the brain a chance. Let us rather advance our ideals and endeavor to realize them whenever possible—for, after all, oratory is a great and much neglected art.

VALENTINE'S DAY

WHAT would you not give, mature and matronly dame, or you, care-marked and gray father of an interesting family, to feel once more that delicious thrill of expectancy and the exultation of requited hope which come to your children on Valentine's Day? I am not certain why thrills should be confined to youth and enthusiasm reserved for immaturity, but certain am I that such is too often the case. We who assume the responsibilities of family are prone to look upon life rather seriously and take matters of sentiment for granted in a very prosaic, undemonstrative way. Life is restricted to so many stomachs to feed and so many bodies to clothe. We overlook St. Valentine's Day as altogether too frivolous for our sedate and burdened maturity. Whereas the day surely belongs to us rather than to childhood. For are we not blessed with a valentine whose gentle ministration is not confined to a single day, or week, or year? And do we not, if we live right, live the message inscribed thereon? Our valentine is not the pretty nothing leftover from last year's stock or purchased for the occasion, but a living, loving personification of the time honored valentine spirit.

In spite of ourselves sentiment plays a great part in human affairs. It is one of the real things of life. Deeds may be forgotten but we cherish sentiments from generation to generation, through centuries of time. Who knows or cares anything about that ancient martyr, Valentinus? All that comes down to us through the years is the pretty sentiment which

seems destined to forever attach to the fourteenth of February. Few people are aware that he lost his head for a sentiment in the early years of the Christian era, although most of us have at some time lost ours for the sentiment which perpetuates his name. And although we commemorate good St. Valentine on the fourteenth of February, it is by no means certain that the pleasing custom did not originate long before he laid his head on the block for love of Christ. Indeed traces of the custom may be found among the northern pagans of ancient Europe. Some say that the birds select their mates on that day and the pretty idea finds expression in literature. Quaint, old Chaucer, father of English poetry, wrote five hundred years ago, "For this was on seynt Valentine's day when every bird cometh ther to chese his mate." Shakespeare two hundred years later alludes to the same tradition in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Saint Valentine is past. Begin these wood-birds to couple now?"

Others trace the custom to the Roman *Lupercalia*, an ancient festival held on the fifteenth of February, and profess to read an analogy between the practices observed on that day and those of our own festival. Perish the thought! If we cannot give St. Valentine the whole credit, let us cling to that other tradition of the birds. Trace for yourself, if you can, the analogy. On the festal day known as *Lupercalia*, members of the two colleges of *Luperci* met at a cave on the Palatine. Goats and dogs were sacrificed, also cakes made of the latest fruits of the harvest. The foreheads of two young men, selected for the occasion, were smeared with blood from the

victims and then wiped with wool dipped in milk. Whereupon the youths were required to laugh, when in reality it was no laughing matter, as the sequel will show. Divested of all clothing, these unfortunate young men were required to run around the hill and strike all women who happened to get in the way with thongs of hide made from the skin of slaughtered victims. Ugh! It makes one shiver to think of it. I am sure such a rite could never be popular in America, with the thermometer playing hide-and-go-seek with the zero point. Possibly the sending of comic valentines may be traced to such a custom, but most of us would prefer the other theory.

It is interesting to note how not only is life perpetuated from generation to generation but so also are the things and customs of life. We croon to our children songs which were sung at our own cradles, which delighted our grand-parents and great-grand-parents and which will become the possession of generations yet unborn. The children who throng the stores today searching for the precious missives are apparently the same children who thronged the stores in our childhood. The valentines are the same with the addition of many which appeal more to grown up children. There are the same lace work edges, so wonderful, so beautiful; the same bright pictures of two hearts which beat as one; the same envelope with its embossed wreath or border. What joy does the sight of that dainty envelope cause! How bright the eyes which eagerly greet the post-man! How caressingly the fingers close over the precious missive, loath, yet eager, to open it and

display the mysterious treasure within! How gloatingly at length does she drink the contents. It is a little thing, only one of life's too rare flowers, but it is destined to blossom perpetually in memory's garden, even after the roses have faded from the cheeks and eyes once bright are dimmed with age. Who could have sent it? And the little, overworked mother gazing fondly on the loveliness of her own youth says never a word, but her own eyes shine, a glint of sunshine from the long ago plays about her lips, and yes, a thrill passes through the heart. The depth and sacredness of that thrill the child can never know until in later years she too looks into eyes so like her own, and experiences the greatest thing in life — maternity.

THE RIVER

TODAY I watched the river stretching itself and swelling with pride and strength, ready for the annual metamorphosis — that almost incredible change from death to life. There is something magnificent in the way in which a river, rousing from its lethargy and rising in its might, bursts asunder the fetters riveted by a stern and uncompromising season and casts them off like flecks of foam. I like to look upon this change we call Spring. A few days of sun to weaken the ice, a few hours of rain to swell the flood and our river with a fine burst of rage will tear loose the fields of ice, break them into huge cubes and hurry them out of sight. In a few days the pond will run clear, the frowns will give way to smiles, and mirroring in its depths the blue of the sky, the trees, the buildings and even the dead weeds and grasses which fringe its banks, the river will be itself again. If we could only throw off our chains and burdens with equal completeness!

There is a fascination about a river which attaches to no other manifestation of Nature. Running water so typifies life that it appeals to all lives. Old age, gazing pensively into the stream and listening to the entrancing murmur, as of angels' voices, sees more than is there portrayed and hears more than the marvelous music. To the vigor of maturity the river is an inspiration. But to youth, especially, does the river belong, and with youth, inseparably associated. Search the fields and gardens of your memory, and somewhere, hidden from all but you, enriching your whole life by its presence, flows a beautiful stream.

Around that stream cluster the closest of childhood's associations. How you used to pick your way across, leaping with fearful delight from stone to stone which trembled and turned beneath your little feet! Now, perhaps, you could almost jump from bank to bank with ease. Around yonder bend was the old swimming hole, fountain of joy, where the waters ran deep. Beyond, in a sheltered nook, willows swept the bank in graceful curves and birds poured out their life melody. There were fish the greediest, and there were spent happy vacation hours. Here is some sacred spot indelibly engraved on the memory by associations still more dear. No other stream is quite the same. Its waters were clearer and sang a richer song which is audible through the years. Close your eyes to the present and from out of the past comes again that song, come the confused voices of childhood's companions and the bright visions of childhood's joys.

O, a wonderful, a living thing is the river — always the same from year to year, yet never the same. The water which sparkles for us and ministers to our comfort and happiness today will tomorrow minister to others. Drawn heavenward by the magic of our sun, it will float in clouds of exquisite delicacy and outline, yet still minister to mankind with the revealing, inspiring ministration of beauty. In its sky pictures, its sunrises and sunsets of superb coloring we may no longer recognize our river; but, reflecting those pictures and the gold and crimson of those sunsets, the river hurries joyfully on to its destiny. Gathered in rain drops or frozen into star crystals of snow, our river again and again visits the

earth, again sings its way along to the sea—that we may live.

Always young, yet how old! Before white men rested their glad eyes on the beauties of the valley, the primitive children of forest and prairie guided their canoes across our river. Before Columbus was, the stream poured its placid water through fertile fields. Before our Saviour was baptized in the Jordan it was an ancient river. Before the civilizations of Assyria and Egypt, Greece and Rome arose and passed away, before the beginnings of history, even before man began to be, did our river, perhaps, live and do its work. And when we who seem so important are gone, our children are gone and generations yet unborn, when the present has become history and we and that history have faded out of the memory and knowledge of man, still our river may sing its song and round out the cycle of its existence, birds will fill the air with their melody and flowers with their fragrance, children will bathe in the waters, lovers will plight their troth and rejoice, old age grow pensive, and God's work of creation proceed toward its glorious culmination.

THE WILLOW

A LOVER of flowers has delighted many friends, during the past week, by distributing branches of the pussy willow, on which the catkins are unusually beautiful. They are large, of rich mouse color, bearing no resemblance to the ordinary flora of the country, and are very suggestive, as the name implies, of tiny Maltese kittens. The beauty of these willow buds bears out the observation, that as a rule only in human beings, and the most civilized races at that, does the female take the lead in color and attractiveness. The most beautiful of the willow catkins are males, and right proudly should we human brothers welcome them into our humble ranks. They are little cupids. Disdaining the usual perianth of flowers, they glory in a nakedness which is truly shocking at this stage of willow civilization, especially when we consider that the tree blossoms early in the season, while the air is yet cool. The first to respond to the warming smiles of the sun in Spring is the willow; its flowers are the first of the year — a fact which bees know well. Ask these busy little insects what is the most certain sign of Spring, and they will tell you, if you can understand their melodious undertone, when the willow blossoms and offers them delicious nectar — their first food after winter's hibernation. But the bees are not the only ones to appreciate its charms. Eagerly do we appropriate the fruits of their industry — the nectar, stored up for a rainy day. The pussy willow is sought by children, far and near, as the incarnation of Spring and can be

resisted by few grown people.

The willow, aside from its beauty, is one of the most useful of trees. There are a great variety of species, of which sixty are found in North America. Its wood is used in making hoops, tool handles and turned wares of various kinds. Paddles for steamboats are of willow, because it loves the water so well. The twigs of the osier are woven into baskets. The first ropes used by man were willow withes. The bark of some species is valuable for tanning and contains a substitute for quinine. Its ashes are rich in potash; its leaves are sometimes fed to cattle, and in some countries even the young shoots are dried and stacked for the purpose. Although the most peaceful of trees, suggestive of country shade and quiet rivers, the willow has figured largely in war. In ancient times its wood was used for shields, and today gunpowder is made from its charcoal. It has also come to man's assistance in great engineering feats. In the famous Eads jetties along the Mississippi, willow brush was extensively employed to prevent erosion, and willow trees strengthen the dykes of Holland. The sprouts are even put to the inglorious use of correcting the youth of the land.

But the chief glory of the willow lies not in these or other uses, important though they are. It is dear because of the inseparable association with childhood days. The boys in years and those other boys grown up cherish the willow in their hearts,—certainly not for the memory of switchings received from reluctant branches, not even because of willow ball clubs which have beguiled so many hours,—but pre-eminently because of willow whistles. Many

pleasures may be in store in after years for the youthful mechanic with his new knife, but what later success can compare with the great happiness which enters the careless heart of that boy as he makes his first whistle? Perhaps he has tried a score of times unsuccessfully. At last, the tree lovingly yields its best shoot for the experiment. Not a bud mars the smoothness for the desired distance. Gleefully and heedless of fingers he circles the soft bark with the keen blade and in anxious expectation gently pounds the green surface. Finally, after many trials, he gives a quick twist; the tender shoot gracefully yields its coat, revealing the exquisitely white wood beneath. Did anything ever look so clean? Carefully one of the gleaming sides is cut partially away, and a hole made in the bark to correspond; the end has already been shaped to fit the mouth. Will it go? One more tiny shaving to let in the air, then in blissful anxiety the fragrant coat is replaced and the wood put to the lips. Hurrah! It whistles! — a fact which the entire neighborhood soon finds out, sometimes to its discomfort. But the old willow tree has not lived in vain. That cheery whistle will sound through the years, until, perhaps, its echo is heard across the boundaries of another world.

The willow, too, has been prominent in history. According to one writer, the political face of North America was altered by the notes of a willow whistle. A prisoner in a Quebec fortress beguiled the tedium of his confinement by making whistles and distributing them to children. The tones of one were so weird in their quality that the guards became frightened, attributing the sound to ghosts. Taking ad-

vantage of this, the prisoner escaped to the British camp and, the only one who knew the secret path up the supposed inaccessible heights, led the immortal Wolf to glory and death. Moses, the great law giver, in establishing the feast of the tabernacle, commanded his people to take "willows of the brook," and "rejoice before the Lord, your God." Out of a whirlwind spake the Lord to Job, of the hippopotamus, "the shady trees cover him with their shadows; the willows of the brook compass him about." David, that great poet of nature, sang, "we hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof," namely the rivers of Babylon. David, we may be sure, loved the willow. Is it reasonable to suppose that the youthful shepherd confined his music to the harp? Did not this lover of green pastures and still waters also know the joy in a willow whistle?

"The willows of the brook!" How inseparably is this tree associated with running water! At sound of the whistle some half forgotten stream is recalled from the past; we see again the graceful sweep of willows on its banks and hear the merry shouts of boys. Willow! The very word breathes of the water. Sound it, letting the voice linger lovingly on each syllable, and there comes to your ears that marvelous music, the entrancing, inspiring song of babbling brooks.

NATURE'S TRANSFORMATION

HOW fickle is humanity! More fickle than spring itself, for no sooner does March storm upon us and tantalizing April draw near, than we forget the delights of winter, the dazzling sheen of snow, the crisp and purifying air, the cozy hearth. Away with them! Give the ice man a chance! Give us birds and flowers, green fields and fragrant woods!

The first robin which braves the fickleness of March amply repays us for all the rigors of winter. With what keen delight we listen, spell-bound, to his melody, after so long a silence! We are all Doubting-Thomases where the first robin is concerned. There is no first but ours. Others may think they heard one, but we smile skeptically, confident that it was a sparrow. When the plump little fellow appears he comes straight to our yard and sings his first song. We hasten out of doors to observe what ravages winter has made in the garden, noting that the roses are green to the very tips; well, well, that hardy lily must have been up a week or more, and see there, the tulips are pushing their green spines through the mulching. The first thistle which spreads its ungainly self over the ground is welcomed for the promise it brings. Soon the rhubarb will appear and the asparagus send up straggling soldiers to spy out the country, preparatory to the advent of the whole troop. For once we take pleasure in the neighbor's chickens as on the sunny side of the barn they complacently arrange their plumage or search the yard for tender, young blades

of grass. A little later they will profoundly stir our wrath. Now there is music in the lay of the hen and in the conceited prattle of her sturdy spouse; his enthusiastic challenge is irresistible. The frogs, too, in the lowlands, are tuning their strident voices for their ceaseless, summer song.

These are some of the perquisites of country life. What do people in the city know of spring? No fairy wand waves for them; no song of birds greets their wakening ears. Spring means more dirt, sloppy streets and a warmer sun. We of the country often fail to appreciate our blessings. We sigh for the metropolis, with its greater advantages for making money, forgetful of the greater opportunities for misery. Is making money the chief aim of life? What wealth can bring the early robin to city homes? There nature is set apart; men must make pilgrimages to worship at her shrine. Here, in the country, she comes to us, and we are better for the contact. Here is where she lives. Where else but in nature can we look for perfection? When is man more responsive to her teachings than in spring, the glad Easter season?

I would almost rather hear a good chorus of frogs in the spring time than grand opera at five dollars a seat. If a few of these interesting creatures can make such a noise, what a tremendous chorus they must have had in old Egypt when Moses called millions of them out of the swamps and marshes until they filled all the land.

Surely the Easter tide is the most interesting season of the year. The very air is filled with mystery. All nature seems bursting with some great

secret. Wonderful are the hidden processes which have been set in motion by a few days of sunshine and rain. In forty days and forty nights, the entire country-side will be a mass of bloom. O, the wonder of it! What is this thing we call life? Where are those roses now? Stiff and straight stand the canes and unattractive in themselves. Only through the eyes of faith can we look into the future and see roses. We drink from the same soil as do our rose cousins. We breathe the same air, rejoice in the same sunshine, are loved by the same Creator. The same possibilities for truth and beauty abide in each. And yet that bare and careless stalk, absorbing in some mysterious manner carbon from the air and moisture from the earth, will produce a rose, and we, — O God, our jails and alms houses and dens of iniquity!

I saw a dandelion in the front yard yesterday. It had pushed through the ground and was just beginning to show its homely and persistent teeth and spread over the grass. Such is the perversity of human nature that the sight awakened no animosity. On the contrary, the few who noticed it actually smiled with pleasure and satisfaction. "Look," they said, "spring has come." Later in the season a dozen hands may be raised against it and butcher knives and weed exterminators will be brought forth from their hiding places. Who can stand unmoved in the presence of the first dandelion of spring, with its promise of greens, of dewy mornings and golden sunshine? Not I, at any rate. As I gazed my bosom swelled, and, stretching forth both hands, I exclaimed after the sublime manner of Byron:

heart for they shall see God."

O, this ceaseless striving for the future, vague hope and fear, necessary, perhaps, in man's intellectual and moral chaos! What is that future but the present drawn out? And what promise can the future bring more than this truth of the present, which being true in the present must necessarily be true in all time? I recently asked a maiden what quality she most admired in men and she answered with simple frankness, "goodness," not of the negative, impotent sort, but goodness in its broadest sense. Here, thought I, is a true child of nature. For it is so with our Great Mother. Only to the pure in heart, does she open the doors of the inner temple and reveal not only a beauty which is the visible expression of God's thought, but God himself. One who is acquainted with his own being can learn to measure his relative goodness by the revelations which nature makes to him. Happy is he who can rise above the sordid affairs of life into a higher, spiritual atmosphere; can hear God in whispering breezes and murmuring water; can see God and his revealed purpose in tree and flower; in the great song of life can detect divine harmonies.

GOVERNMENT AND SEEDS

MY heart was gladdened the other day by the receipt of a package of garden seeds from the United States Government, through the good auspices of a Congressman who ranks high in the estimation of his country. The package contained a choice assortment of seeds,—lettuce, radish, bean and beet with a few watermelons thrown in for luck, calculated, you must admit, to tickle a well ordered imagination and awaken enthusiastic visions of spring and early vegetables in spite of blizzards and snow storms. It is very pleasing to be on such intimate terms with a real, live Congressman, who, in the hurry and bustle incident to conducting the internal affairs of this great country has time also to look after the internal affairs of some humble countryman. Note, too, the correct philanthropic spirit in which the seeds were sent. Did this famous man forward a bushel of potatoes, or beets, or a package of peas ready grown, their green pods refreshing the eye and making the mouth water unduly for the contents? Not a bit of it. For that would be placing a premium on idleness. To profit by the gift I must labor, stir the soil, drink in the oxygen of a spring morning, absorb the life virtue of spring sunshine,—in short, become a better citizen.

It is gratifying, also, to be so highly regarded by this great Government; to feel that you are necessary to the Department of Agriculture. I do not mention this incident of the seeds in a vainglorious spirit. Far from it. But simply to record a circum-

stance which demonstrates beyond dispute that republics are not ungrateful. Anyone can get mail when the necessary postage is affixed. But here was a package on which was no stamp. "Official business" was the magic talisman which sent it forth on its important mission, which brought trains and postal clerks into my service. How complacent it makes one feel to get a government envelope with the autograph of some highly esteemed Senator or Representative scrawled over the top thereof. Government usually seems so far off. We speak of it as something foreign to ourselves, in which we have no part. What does Government care for us? Then some stormy morning when the world looks dark, the mail carrier comes with an air of importance and leaves us a package of seeds. Government at once takes on new meaning. We are again citizen kings, a part of the greatest Government on earth.

Is it not fine for our Congressmen to take such interest in gardening, which is reputed to have been the first of all human occupations, and even at this late day is of paramount importance? The great power of habit is hereby shown, and the value of getting a boy started in the right direction. Strange as it may seem, many of our Congressmen were once boys (I trust I am not giving away family secrets) — little, freckle-nosed boys, barefooted and with one suspender fastened by a shingle nail. At this blissful period of their lives, when they cared nothing for Presidents or Speakerships, were interested in no public question save that of expansion, most of them labored in the country. There, all unconscious of future honors, they learned the dis-

tinguishing traits of pumpkins and beets, committed whole rows of corn and potatoes to memory, and indulged in similar agricultural pursuits, which have since made them so invaluable an adjunct to farmers' picnics and county fairs.

They are no longer boys, yet retain all their boyish enthusiasm for seeds. What an interesting sight it must be to see these great men in Washington, after a day of unusual mental strain in the halls of Congress, pull off their coats and go out into the garden to gather seeds for some less fortunate friend.

It is a fine thing, too, for the United States Government to take such interest in an humble citizen ; after sowing the West Indies and Philipppines with grape and canister, thirteen-inch shells and the like, to come down to the real business of life and virtually admit that war is but an incident in a nation's career, important at the time and far reaching in its results, yet an incident and sometimes an accident ; that the great ideal of our country is not conquest, but civilization and democracy ; the great strength of our country lies not in battleships and armies but in its men and women, fitted by their uses of peace to meet the emergencies of war. For the great life of our Nation is a life of peace, and its chief occupation is the raising of peace and other seeds, and sometimes cane.

I did not think my skill as a gardener, however well known by my neighbors and however well appreciated by my neighbors' fowls, would so soon penetrate to the Capital. Who knows ? Perhaps the President, himself, suggested the sending of this

package! "Old man," he may have said, affectionately, "I understand that a newspaper friend of mine out in the rural districts has raised some all-fired big beats. Give him these seeds with my compliments, ask him to plant them in the full of the moon and send me a record of the results, with any recommendations he may be willing to make for the benefit of his distracted, but appreciative country."

STRAWBERRIES

DURING the early days in May when clouds, perhaps, hang heavy overhead and life does not seem worth living, it is cheering to read that strawberries are ripe in Southern Illinois and the crop promises to be an unusually large one. There are few things better calculated to drive away melancholy and reconcile one to physical existence than ripe strawberries. I know it is common to be thinking of eating. "Get on a higher plane," says our ethereal friend; "think of your soul and eat a few platitudes for dinner." All of which may be well enough, but no one eats strawberries, — that is, no one who has a proper conception of the matter. He absorbs them. And as the rich flavor, the quintessence of spring, permeates through his system, he takes another hold upon life and begins to think that the world is very beautiful, after all. I am willing to admit that eating is an expensive habit, even if it be not altogether bad, but consuming great luscious strawberries, with a sprinkling of sugar and a dash of cream, if you like, is not eating. The daintiest bud of womanhood, with eyes of heaven's own blue, and rich red lips that open like a kiss, and I am sure are utterly unconscious of even the existence of roast beef and cabbage — such an ethereal being as this does not look at all out of place toying with a strawberry. It is a pretty sight to see a dish of this royal fruit melt away before Her Dainty Highness, like dew before the sun.

How like a maiden's heart is the berry shaped! At least like the pictures of one sometimes found

in the back of the dictionary. I never happened to see a maiden's heart. How tender and easily broken ! Coarseness and selfishness, masculinity almost, seem out of place in its presence. And what flavor ! In that first ecstatic, irresistible, indescribable taste one absorbs the glory of the entire spring, — long sunshiny days and moonlight nights ; hears the singing of birds, the rustling of trees. Standing on the threshold between spring and summer, each season is revealed in its lusciousness. John Burroughs, that keen observer and great writer, says that he once potted a few plants and grew them in the house. They ripened in March and filled the room with their delicious odor, apparently teasing the appetite beyond all endurance. "For", he naively continues, "there were not many of them ; just enough to make one consider whether it was not worth while to kill off the rest of the household so that the berries need not be divided." I do hope they have strawberries in heaven. I would far rather stroll through an ethereal meadow with wild strawberries hidden in the grass and graze like Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, than walk on streets of shining gold.

Wild strawberries ! How the words bring back youth and the dear, old days in New England or New York. Fruit growers have accomplished wonders but have not been able to transfer the elusive, wild flavor which the proudest berry that grows in your garden can not equal. Half up the mountain you will find them shyly hiding in the grass. Like real maidens' hearts, they will not yield themselves unsought. You must love them and show your de-

votion. Down on your knees ! Nay, throw yourself prone at their feet, if you would win them. What though yonder in the valley the busy world is revealed. Here is the divine music of Nature, the whispering of pine trees, glimpses of hill-side and valley and woodland, the perfumed breezes of spring ; here are strawberries. I would not give the memory of a single afternoon of childish joy, roaming the hills for strawberries, for all the wealth of Cræsus and a forgotten boyhood.

THE DANDELION

IN walking or driving about town in May, one is impressed with the great number of people on their knees, bending over the pretty lawns. The most natural inference is that they are engaged in worship, and surely no fairer shrine could be found. But they are not at their devotions — far from it. In fact, the opposite is almost true, for some of them are swearing. All are doing their best to exterminate the dandelions. It is hard work, too; it makes one's back ache, creates a discord in the general harmony of nature, and, worse than all else, bags the knees of one's trousers — if that one happens to be a man. It is really the ruination of the nether garments. A little frolic on the front lawn with the dandelions would have made Apollo Belvidere, himself, look bowlegged — providing, of course, that Apollo wore trousers, which he ought to have done if he didn't. A popular clergyman, whose name I will not divulge for the sake of his family, spent almost an entire day digging dandelions with which his large yard was thickly spattered. He finally gave up in disgust and went down town, thinking anything but ministerial thoughts. What was his surprise, on returning at supper time, to see a marvelous stretch of green without a yellow head in sight. It made him happy the entire evening, for he was not aware that dandelions, following the example of many merchants, close their places of business at six o'clock, and he imagined that he had succeeded in the work of extermination. The next morning he did not miss a single blossom.

What has the poor dandelion done to deserve such relentless enmity? Of what enormity has it been guilty that it should be hewn down and cast into the oven? Is it not as pretty as the rose? Is it not the first blossom to greet us in spring and the last to leave in fall — often smiling on us in December? There are only three months in twelve without the dandelion. How entrancingly beautiful are the rich, green lawns, dotted with specks of gold, as if bits of sunshine had been caught and held for our inspection and delight!

But, if the esthetic side of the dandelion fails to appeal to you, there is that other, considered by some more practical. Does not this humble plant minister to the physical needs of man? We cannot eat grass, let the lawn be never so fair and tender. No one ever ate grass, except Nebuchadnezzar and he did not make a success at it. But dandelion greens! Ah, there is something that should appeal to all. The first, tiny, yellow eye, which opens after a long, hard winter, telling of the glories of spring, does not receive a warmer welcome in the heart of storm-bound humanity than does the selfsame plant receive in the stomach. A man who is color-blind can appreciate greens. Then there is dandelion coffee. What! Never heard of this delectable drink, warranted to cure all the ills to which flesh is heir? There are worse things in the world than a concoction of dried dandelion root. Is it not a comforting thought in hard times, that so many of our door yards contain both food and drink along with other things too numerous to mention?

If these great arguments fail to reconcile you to

the ubiquitous dandelion there is a sentimental side to the plant. Is there a woman so old that she has forgotten the joy of making dandelion chains, link after link, and dandelion curls? Is there a man who even yet does not feel an impulse to pull the hoary head from some venerable, stately blossom and blow through the hollow, milky stem, to produce the note of a miniature organ? Since time immemorial have romantic maidens plucked these gray haired flowers to see if their sweethearts really loved. Close they hold the whitened heads to cherry lips and blow long and hard. The gray hairs scatter far and wide to take root in lawns and gardens, the bald pate of the blossom appears, and, see! not one hair is left where there were a hundred a moment before. The sweetheart loves! Boys, less sentimental, blow to see if their mothers want them and they blow thrice that there may be no doubt as to their temporary freedom from maternal authority. I noticed two girls giving dandelions the names of their mates and gaily tossing them in pairs into the brook to learn their fate. Side by side, some of the floral couples glided swiftly along until out of sight; again one would strand and leave its companion to finish the journey alone. Thus we all float through life.

If you are not moved by the practical, the artistic, or the sentimental side of this remarkable plant, the poor, down-trodden dandelion must make the best of it. I have a neighbor to whom the sight of a yellow head, nestling in the grass, is like waving a red flag in the face of an unmentionable beast. Early and late he toils on his lawn from which he has already this season gathered six bushels and ex-

pects to make it twelve before the summer is far advanced. He says with Grant that he will "fight it out on this 'lion if it takes all summer." All of which is proper enough if he feels that way, but he always ends with offering to loan me his "weed eradicator." Some people cannot take a hint, and have to be kicked before they see a point, but even a gentle, little prod like that is sufficient to send me into the yard, armed with a butcher knife, to bag my trousers in vain attempts to exterminate the dandelions, while he looks on approvingly. But it is of no use. They come up bright and early the next morning and smile cheerfully as I pass. Flowers of hope and truth are they, springing eternal on the breast of Nature, and, though crushed to earth, rising again. Neither do they require hoeing and watering and do not have to be covered on frosty nights. Eastern people in California are pining to see one of these bright blossoms while the California poppy which we of the east cultivate assiduously with such scanty results, grows there in wild profusion. I have often been tempted to plant and tenderly care for a dandelion as an experiment to see if the grass would not creep into the bed and choke out the flowers.

"That is all very well," I hear some one say. "No doubt the dandelion is very pretty in its place. But its place is by the road side and along the railroad track, not in my dearly beloved lawn. I, too, like the dandelion. So am I fond of roast beef, but do you suppose I want to fill my door yard with cows?" The logic is unanswerable and the conclusion, irresistible. All considerations of beauty, sentiment and the practical vanish in a trice. Welcome, the weed eradicator! The dandelion must go!

DAISIES AND WEEDS

SOME of this year's "sweet girl graduates" have been editorially criticised because they chose the daisy for a class flower — "a mere weed," says a prosaic editor, "the bane of farmers". "Such sentimental liking for the daisy, the golden rod and other weeds," continues the utilitarian, "is a fad, unworthy of cultured people," or words to that effect. Are daisies weeds? Well, so be it. They are none the less beautiful on that account. To be sure, their foliage is not much to brag of, nor are they sought after for their fragrance, but what appeals to the eye and through our sense of beauty to the soul more than a field of daisies, looking up to heaven with sweet modesty, nodding with each passing breeze? Appreciation of beauty depends upon the point of view. The editors in question regard these blossoms from the standpoint of utility. They find no use for the daisy, utterly forgetful that beauty has its own place, and a great one, in the world's development. If the owner of the whitened field is a farmer, he probably considers his daisies weeds, for the daisy does not, it is true, make good hay. It is not considered a delicacy by man or beast. Neither is the rose for that matter, so where is the superiority on that score? The trouble with many of us is that our artistic sense is circumscribed by the immediate usefulness of an object. Carry this idea to its legitimate conclusion and you will transform our pretty, green lawns and parks into unsightly hay fields. Yet, even hay fields are picturesque under harmonious conditions.

If the editor were running the universe he would, no doubt, arrange things on a different plan. Under his benign administration, what we call weeds would require an extraordinary amount of cultivation to make them grow ; while their aristocratic brothers and sisters would grow nights and Sundays, utterly indifferent to their environment. It must be confessed there is much to commend in this idea and at first thought one feels like exclaiming "hasten the day." It would be a new and altogether delightful sensation to return from an outing and find our choice bed of purslain stunted and killed for lack of hoeing; to stroll into the garden, if we are fortunate enough to have one, when the morning dew glistens from a thousand leaves, and discover our pet burdocks withered and dead for want of water; to watch the white clover choke and crowd out the plantain; roses instead of rag weed spring up in the middle of the drive, and flowers by the road side everywhere. Nothing tries the soul of an ordinary mortal more than, returning from a brief vacation, to find a bushel of thistles in his greatly cherished lawn. Where they come from no man knoweth, but he can even feel their noxious presence. From a purely artistic standpoint the thistle may be beautiful, but no one can appreciate its beauty under such circumstances. It is only when we call it a cactus and cultivate it assiduously with meagre results, we feel it worthy a place in our affections and conservatory. This brings us to the question, what are weeds? Weeds are the ancestors of flowers. The sweetest rose that blooms, beloved alike by man and worm, was once a weed. Weeds may be described as her-

baceous plants out of place. Transplant the daisy weed from the hayfield into the garden and it becomes at once a beautiful flower ; daisy bouquets all summer long will be the result.

But whether weed or flower, it is worth a trip into the country to see the daisy fields. Go on your wheel, the cars, drive or walk, any way to get there. First you will see them in timid, scattered patches along the road-side, as if fearful of trespassing ; then your way will be through continuous bloom ; finally you will come to a field literally white with the pretty, modest blossoms. Go into the field ; throw yourself prone on mother earth, and with daisies nodding and whispering over your head, blue sky and fleecy clouds far above and love of nature in your heart, forget for a moment care and the money question and thank God that you are alive.

In truth, the daisy is an ideal class flower. Daisies are beautiful, yet modest. There is no pretense or false pride about them, yet they look the world in the face. Quick to take advantage of favorable circumstances, they nevertheless make the best of all circumstances ; do good to those who spitefully use them and although trodden under the feet of unappreciative humanity, come up smiling. They are stayers, flourishing with tenacity of purpose which is itself an inspiration. The daisy may be likened to the modern club or lodge. It believes in co-operation, in the brotherhood of the race. For the daisy is not a single flower ; it is a whole colony, male and female, who work together for a common object, love, marry and rear children. The yellow eye in the centre of the daisy consists of many tubular

blossoms. The outer white florets, from which maidens love to know their fortunes, are distinct flowers, members of the daisy club. These white eyelashes are indeed a club within a club—a woman's club, being composed entirely of females. There is not such great difference between human beings and plants after all. We, conceited animals, think flowers were created for our especial benefit; the rich coloring to delight our eyes; the pleasing fragrance for our delectation. But while, man-like, we appropriate these things, they are not ours. The brilliant hues of our garden pets are to attract, not us, but bees and other insects in search of honey. The artistic markings of the tiger lily are simply guides to the honey cup; the soft fragrance of the sweet pea blossoms is to lure the insects; and all this solicitude for bees and insects, from which man profits so greatly, is because the flower youths and maidens wish to get married. The daisy and golden rod weeds! The next thing we know some one will insist that sunflower and dandelion blossoms are not beautiful.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

IT is said that starving men dream of feasts and feasting. So, too, have I and you, perhaps, in the midst of winter, starving for a taste of woodland and meadow and a draught of the perfumed and balmy atmosphere of spring, sometimes dreamed of fortunate friends basking somewhere in the sunshine of fair Italy, on the historic shores of the Mediterranean. Think of that, you toiler at your bench, you slave of a dingy office, you weary man of affairs! To most of us the Mediterranean is but a fascinating dream and must ever remain so. It is a part of our great dream-life, which, after all, is a most important part of our earthly career. Books, the writers of which we may never see and whose word we may well doubt against the evidence of our own senses,—books tell us that there is a Mediterranean. But, for one, I intend to ask my friends, as soon as they return, if there really is such a place, or is it only a phantasmagoria of the imagination? We have heard much of this far-away sea, the blue of its sky and the glory of its sunshine. But here are people we know who are actually going there, so it is claimed; are there now, in all probability. And in the course of time they will return and talk learnedly and copiously of Italy, of Venice, Florence, Rome, Vesuvius and other dream-places, and we shall listen respectfully, knowing well that such scenes exist only in that wonderful world, without time or space or law of gravitation — the imagination.

Yet, if we accept only those things as true that

are bounded by the limit of our physical perception, the world is narrow indeed. Imagination leaps over the intermediate waste of land and ocean and time and creates a Mediterranean which is our own splendid dream, more real than that which is actual and present. To the rude fisherman drawing his net in its placid waters the Mediterranean is a place to fish. But I, in whatever land or clime, see not only two thousand miles of beauty which eyes and soul would fain drink in, I see the sweep of history. Across these waters from old Egypt and Phœnicia are wafted the germs of civilization. Great Greece rises from its azure flood. I follow the wanderings of Ulysses, whose name Homer has made more enduring than the hills. Xerxes with his two million Persians and that mighty fleet, four thousand ships, proudly embarks on this ancient sea and hurls himself on these wonderful Greeks at Salamis. There is a battle at which imagination stands appalled. The new civilization triumphs and flourishes, until Alexander sighs for more worlds to conquer.

Across these waters Aeneas, of whom Vergil sang, makes his way to Carthage,—and Italy; Romulus lays the foundations of mighty Rome, and Rome rules the world. Across this sea, again and again the great Hannibal and his Carthaginian warriors in vain hurl their strength against this Rome, and across the sea echo the words of Cato, thundered in the Roman Senate, “Carthage must be destroyed.” Paul, that wonderful man of God, one of the grandest figures in all history, through shipwreck and suffering, every inch a king, though in chains, is dragged over this beautiful but treacher-

ous sea to Rome and martyrdom and immortality. Spain rises into greatness. A Columbus sets out from a Mediterranean port and discovers a new world. The tramp of mighty armies and the horrid clash of arms shake all Europe; then the great Napoleon beats out his soul at Elba. Ah, there is much to see in our Mediterranean.

Surely, here are scenes worth visiting. Yet many profess not to care for travel — a most comfortable condition of mind when one has not the wherewithal. Said Emerson,

“Why seek Italy,
Who can not circumnavigate the sea
Of thoughts and things at home and
still adjourn

The nearest matter for a thousand days? ”

Why indeed? And yet, I could be induced to seek Italy and let the thoughts and things at home shift for themselves a season. After all, there is virtue in contact. Fed through the physical senses, the imagination burns more brilliantly. The Old World is the home of History. Under the blue of Italy's sky, methinks one could feel the centuries surging through his veins.

THE DOMESTICATED FELINE

MY neighbor has been having an experience, during the past few weeks, which, although common enough perhaps, was harrowing in the extreme. Last fall a tramp cat took up her abode in his cellar, unmindful of the fact that she was not wanted. It mattered not that sundry portions of milk and crumbs were doled out to her grudgingly ; she ate and was thankful. Many were the plans proposed for getting rid of the unwelcome guest without hurting her feelings. The humane owner of the cellar aroused the suspicions of his friends by making secret night excursions to various parts of the town, a basket hung on one arm. They little knew that within the basket the despised cat clawed and struggled for liberty. When he had reached some out-of-the-way place, remote from home, puss would be turned loose. With a bound and a yell she would put a safe distance between herself and her tormentor, then stop and gaze at him reproachfully until he would feel as if he had been dodging the assessor. Bright and early the next morning she would be at her old place near the cellar door, waiting for her breakfast. Once, he took her so far and by such an intricate route that days elapsed before her return, and he was pained to see that she had grown as thin as a shadow. The atrocities which a humane man will commit from the kindness in his heart are truly astonishing ! As a last resort, the cat was chloroformed in a barrel and taken out and buried. But she was at the cellar door the next morning, as usual. In despair, the wretched man took her to his office.

Then it was that the inherent meanness of the creature became manifest. She crawled under the floor to an inaccessible spot and gave up the ghost. To such lengths will spite carry even an inferior animal.

There is something peculiar in the relations between a cat and human beings. We are either quite fond of pussy or we hate and despise her. There is no half way business about it. We can be indifferent to a dog but if we do not like a cat we have no sympathy for her whatever. Neither can we forgive a homely cat. An ill favored dog is often the greatest pet but pussy must be sleek and handsome if she would win favor. Having done so, she becomes the presiding genius of the place, an outlet for a great deal of harmless affection. There is no greater picture of solid comfort and contentment than a cat on a rug before the fire, unless it be a cow calmly chewing her cud in the shade of a summer tree. The cow possesses a great advantage, one which would commend itself to hurried business men. She eats her dinner in haste and chews it afterward at her leisure. But while this boon is denied the cat, hers is the satisfaction of being ornamental rather than useful. In her most indolent moments nature is at work within the cow for the good of humanity. But puss lives to be waited upon. She "toils not, neither does she spin." To be sure, once in a great while she catches a mouse; but it is by way of adding variety and therefore comfort to her life, as an occasional discord is said to bring out the harmony in music.

Cats are credited with nine lives and they need them all; for no animal is so sought by assassins as

the domesticated feline. Even if one is not thirsting for the gore of his own cat, as is often the case, he would like to murder the wretched creatures which belong to the neighbors. If the cat were not so musically inclined she would get into less trouble. For some reason the majority of people do not prize her humble efforts in this direction. I have not the hardihood to set up a defense of these nocturnal concerts. They are sometimes untimely and are certainly not conducive to sleep. But regarded as a vigorous and persevering effort of an inferior animal to express its feelings in song, they are not entirely without interest. Even the warbling of a canary grows tiresome when too greatly prolonged, and one must be in harmony with the music to really appreciate Wagnerian opera.

Perhaps I ought not to confess it to a critical public, but I sometimes enjoy a quartet of feline voices on the back porch. If other people would suspend hostilities long enough to listen intelligently and really try to interpret the music, they would find much to interest them. Just why cats prefer the mystic hour of midnight when other concerts begin at eight, has never been thoroughly explained. Perhaps it accounts for the unpopularity of their songs. No matter; listen intently and dispassionately and you will plainly hear soprano, tenor, contralto and bass strangely intermingled in weird confusion. So, have I heard a country choir of earnest but untrained voices, struggle with an anthem. They sing alone, by twos, by threes, all together, then fall behind and hurry to catch up, with such vigor that the listeners are constrained to wonder whether the

singers are in pain. Were they to voice their troubles on the back porch at midnight, perhaps we should throw shoes and hair brushes at them also. In the morning when puss demurely makes her toilet we gaze at her curiously. Could she have been one of the midnight performers? No, it must have been that good-for-nothing, miserable cat over the way.

Yet a sleek and handsome cat, one which we might almost excuse the ancient Egyptians for worshipping, adds much to every well regulated household. She seems a part of the home. What comfort, to sit before a blazing fire, with puss contentedly purring on the rug. With what assurance does she appropriate the snuggest corner! How daintily she makes her toilet until not a single hair is out of place! How lazily she yawns, showing for a moment those cruel teeth! She gazes at you complacently when you enter the room. Perhaps she will even condescend to rise and rub gently against your legs, but it is plainly a condescension on her part. Sometimes she will deign to play a little with ball or spool, but she still maintains her dignity. Not for a moment does she forget that she is mistress of the house. The various members of the family are useful in their way. They can pet her and wait on her and build fires for her to enjoy, but puss belongs to the place and the place to her. An outcast cat is certainly a miserable and unfortunate creature; but a well-fed household favorite occupies a very enviable position.

Notwithstanding these facts, there is an evident and far reaching discrimination against poor puss in

favor of her rival, the dog. Law regards her as a nonentity, while the dog is property. She pays no taxes, wears neither muzzle nor tag and is assassinated with impunity. Never does beautiful woman lead her through the streets or carry her snugly ensconced within shapely arms. No. If a person feels called upon to carry a cat, shunning publicity, he waits until after dark or slinks through back alleys. It is difficult to estimate how many there are in the country. There must be millions of regularly accredited cats with their credentials in good order. In addition, there are numerous cat-at-large. What a concert, could they be assembled in one back yard in tuneful chorus !

NATURE'S ORCHESTRA

BY midsummer Nature has her orchestra in full play. The curtain is rung up nightly at sun down and the concert continues without intermission, regardless of whether the human audience is listening or was lulled to sleep by the monotonous music hours ago. The vocal part of the program is practically over. Early in the spring the frogs began to tune their strident voices. With what rapture did we listen to their weird minstrelsy which told of approaching summer! Then the birds filled the air with their glad melody, making the days one round of song until midsummer silenced the sweet voices. To be sure, we have been favored with an occasional instrumental solo, as the yellow hammer cheerfully drummed on the roof for no other reason apparently than to give expression to the exuberance of his feelings, and the harvest fly sounded his strange, shrill note. But not until August can Nature be said to have fairly commenced Part 2 of the entertainment. What an earnest, energetic orchestra it is! What a myriad of players! How it fills and takes possession of the night, until the very darkness vibrates, and heart and soul sing in voiceless sympathy! Nature does not love silence and has gone to infinite pains to arrange a program, both constant and varied. Solitude is comparatively easy to find but absolute silence is a rare experience. Let the night be never so dark and the listener wrap his soul in gloom and retire into the wilderness or lose himself in the depths of the forest. Still do those silent sounds come to his ears through the darkness,

revealing the solitude by their mysterious music.

I am aware that all do not like this music. Some people even characterize it as din. To them it is harsh and strident ; to others doleful, causing an unaccountable depression of spirits, a desire for light and the companionship of friends. It is a matter of temperament, I suppose. To the poetic nature, the chirping is not only cheerful in itself and not unmusical, but it contains a world of suggestion. Night in its overpowering beauty and grandeur becomes audible. Did not Dickens, that prose poet, chirp of the Cricket on the Hearth and Holmes sing:

“I love to hear thine earnest voice,

Wherever thou art hid,

Thou testy little dogmatist.

Thou pretty katydid? ”

The katydid may well be said to play first fiddle in this orchestra and it must be conceded that he plays it loud and strong. His cousin, the cricket, does his full share and those other cousins, the grasshoppers, come in on the chorus with commendable zeal. Some of them cannot wait until evening and the regular performance begins, but can be heard late in the afternoon tuning their violins and giving the strings an occasional scrape by way of preparation. When darkness comes, how they do play ! Listen closely and you will detect a half dozen sets of musicians, each playing in different time and on a different key, but the effect is not altogether inharmonious. High above the rest from a neighboring tree, which one you cannot determine, sounds the refrain, “Katy did, she did, she didn’t, Katy didn’t, did, did, didn’t, she did,” until

we fain would know who this Katy is and of what mischief she has been guilty to occasion such noisy and public denunciation.

The katydid is noisy, that's a fact. We must remember that he is not playing for our pleasure. That nightly chorus is not for us. It may shock our conceit to feel that the katydids and crickets are quite indifferent to our approbation. We like to think that the planets roll in space for our benefit, that for us all nature is attuned, and indeed there is a measure of truth in the conception. But what cares the katydid for the human insect? That lusty, little musician is in love. He is serenading his sweetheart to the best of his ability, who is also a katydid, perhaps Katy herself whose virtues, instead of faults, are being extolled. How great that love if in proportion to his song. I want to emphasize the fact that only the male is thus musically inclined. Katy herself is as dumb as an oyster. Like the human males these young gallants prefer to do their courting after nightfall with the lights turned low. Little know they of frost or the corn crop. Let the old citizen base what weather prognostications he may on the sturdy song and welcome, if only Katy, up in the tree, enjoys the serenade. We certainly must give her credit for enjoying it, whatever may be our opinion regarding the matter. It does not stand to reason that the little minstrel would be so faithful were his efforts unappreciated. It follows, too, that dumb as she is, Katy and all the little cricket and grasshopper maidens can hear. What a queer place to wear one's ears! Naturalists tell us that cricket girls have ears in their legs, near the thigh.

Music seems to be the universal art, the bond which binds together Nature's parts. A certain rythm and harmony pervades all space, but the wondrous music is too delicate for human ears. Nearly the whole animal kingdom is susceptible in a greater or less degree to the charms of music and to many is added the power of expression. Man who revels in grand opera and pays fabulous prices to prima donnas may, perhaps, boast the greatest culture, but he is not alone. Note the earnest quartette of feline voices in the back yard, the awe inspiring song of the donkey, the clarion tones of the rooster, the vocal efforts of the neighbor's dog, the hum of insects, the gleeful lay of the mosquito, the wonderful sweetness of bird music ! Truly, this is a great world and we are all brothers.

ON BEING BALD

IT is really a comfort in hot summer days to be bald. Man greatly admires the long and abundant tresses which are at once the glory and bane of womanhood, but he does not envy them. The man whose head is bare in spots like a lawn beneath a hammock is for once in luck. The gentle zephyrs of midsummer play about his classic temples, bringing neither discomfort nor influenza. Nature evidently intended these breezes to blow through copious whiskers and luxuriant locks. But man has flown in the face of Nature once too often and the Ancient Dame, woman-like, gets even with him by going back on herself. He persists in shaving his face and she, abandoning the custom of centuries, insists upon shaving his head. Between the two the race seems destined to become hairless.

Let the baldheaded man gather what crumbs of comfort he can from these observations; there are many thorns in his pathway. The world looks on a bald head with suspicion which the most exemplary conduct fails to wholly avert. Having a full shock of hair, one can sow great patches of wild oats in sweet obscurity; but let the shining surface of his scalp come into view, visible to the gaze of a cold and unsympathetic world, he is a marked man thenceforward — fit target for wit, calumny and falsehood. That good man, the prophet Elisha, was bald, and a terrible fate befell his calumniators, fair warning to future ages.

As beauty is said to lie in the eye of the beholder, so good and evil dwell in the imagination. What is more eminently respectable than a bald head in

church? It occupies the front pew and fairly glows with righteousness and respectability. It is a shining witness to virtue and sobriety, adding dignity to the service, emphasizing the truths of the sermon. We feel proud to worship in close proximity. The owner may be fast asleep, but his shining poll stands sponsor for him and clothes him with unthought-of graces. Yet, behold that same bald head in the front row at the theater. What a positively wicked look! The baldheaded man assuredly has a grievance and he should not hesitate to make it known.

The questions naturally arise, what is the immediate cause of Nature's discrimination against the heads of so many of her children, and what becomes of the hair? The hairs of man's head are numbered, the Good Book tells us; but there must be a quantity of missing numbers. Woman's hair can be found everywhere — on men's coat sleeves, in the butter; the brush and comb are full of it; yet, like the widow's cruse of oil, the supply remains undiminished. A baldheaded woman is a rarity. But man's hair melts away like dew before the sun, and no one can say whither it goeth. Why this discrimination between the sexes? Is it profound thoughts which heat the brains of men — the intense mental activity of modern times? Woman sometimes thinks and never yet has the process loosened her hair. The only satisfactory solution of the problem seems to be the difference in the millinery worn by the two sexes. Woman's vanity is the salvation of her tresses. Her hat is an ornament which leaves the head untrameled. Man's hat is a monstrosity which excludes the air and heats the scalp. Observe that his

bald spot follows the line of the crown.

Nature not only discriminates between the sexes in this particular but between different classes of the same sex. Has anyone seen a baldheaded musician outside of a brass band? There seems to be something in music which makes the hair grow. Music hath charms we know not of. The soothing melody of Chopin and the forceful harmony of Wagner lengthen the hair and make it grow in profusion, which even poesy and football cannot equal.

It is a serious time when a man begins to grow bald. He may flatter himself that the cause is severe brainwork ; but no one else is deceived. Then, too, every one of his acquaintances seems required to tell him about it. As if the trouble had not caused him enough anxiety already ! He stands the pressure as long as possible, then falls an easy victim to the first agent with his hair restorer, and purchases "Nature's own remedy", extract of grape vine or some equally efficacious compound. O joy ! a fuzz forms on his head, which he proudly exhibits ; he is pointed out by the agent as a living demonstration of the remedy's virtue. Alas ! fuzz is not hair. The bare spot continues to expand until it looks like a map of Greece, and the misguided man resigns himself to his fate and makes what hair he has left go as far as possible. That man is not fit to join the honorable ranks of the bald who cannot spread and plaster down three hairs until they cover the entire top of his cranium. Meanwhile, a fortune awaits the man or woman whose inventive genius can stop the beard from growing and keep the hair from falling out.

WOMEN—YOUNG AND OLD

IT is not often that a man sits down deliberately to write of woman. A proper elaboration of such a theme is clearly impossible. To be sure, I once knew a learned D. D. who tried it. But even he was obliged to court the muse and required two hundred and ninety-seven stanzas, of five lines each, to perform the task to his satisfaction. Besides, he was about to be married. Every one must admit that woman is a necessity in the world's economy — a delightful necessity, if you like; but further than that few are willing to go. For woman is one of God's inscrutable mysteries. Given a certain man and known conditions, it can be figured with reasonable accuracy how he will act. Not so with woman. Like some delicately attuned instrument, she not only responds to all the touches of life, but vibrates in sympathy with various influences. The result may be harmony, but it is uncertain. We think we understand her, then some new mood disturbs our calculations or some new depth of character is revealed which upsets all our notions. Still, one can look and admire and record his observations, even if he does not understand their import.

Walking down the street, the other day, was a young woman with bright eyes and the roses of eighteen summers in her cheeks. Under her flower-decked hat shone a wealth of soft, brown hair, with that enchanting glossiness which is sure evidence of much brushing, and she had on a new gown. It was one of those dreamy organdies — a remarkable creation — and was very beautiful, a fact which no

one knew better than this self-same bit of budding womanhood. She tripped along the street with an indescribable swing which set all the frills and flounces in motion, and her silk petticoat rustled irresistibly. Occasionally she lifted her skirt a few inches and let it fall again to straighten the folds, perhaps to show the silk, while every movement of the graceful figure and every wave of thought and emotion which swept over her countenance said plainer than words, "Just look at me!" She was certainly worth looking at and a gray haired man was so absorbed in contemplation that he had eyes for nothing else. He seemed ashamed at being caught in the act, as if he had committed some heinous offense against society.

Now, why should not old age look at youth, even youth in petticoats, and why be ashamed to admire the loveliness of eighteen, than which there is surely nothing more beautiful? What are organs for if not to look at? Calico or cheese cloth, whatever that is, would be within the law, but would not be tolerated a moment. Mother Nature, herself, is clothed in garments most exquisite. You never catch her in calico. To be sure, the young woman was overly conscious of her attractions; how could she help it? There is nothing which will make a man,—strong, masculine creature that he is and supposed to be above such trifles,—so conscious of himself as a new suit of clothes. Shall we begrudge his sister the same privilege, and look askance at old age which still retains the heart of youth and eyes for the beautiful?

Woman has been described as a human blossom,

and, in truth, there seems some reason for so poetic a metaphor. Rather is she a composite flower, combining the attributes of all. Is she not as beautiful as the rose and as full of briers? Her persistence is that of the dandelion; no willow surpasses her in grace, nor sensitive plant in emotion. She is as clinging as the sweet pea and as dainty, as peppery as the nasturtium. In short, is she not a daisy? Even like the lily of the field, for Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these fair creatures.

Yet, in spite of this undisputed likeness, woman was never known to have anything to wear, unless just from the hands of her dressmaker. Is there to be a party, or an excursion planned, even a picnic, she "has not a thing to put on." Her husband, poor soul, has reason to know that the big closet hangs full of gowns of every description. When they were married that same closet was divided by an imaginary line exactly in the middle. The east half, next the door, was claimed for her dainty dresses; the other was to be held sacred to his scanty wardrobe. Like the American Indian he has gradually been driven west until his one good suit occupies the last hook where a search light is necessary to find it. But she always goes to the party and seems to enjoy herself, notwithstanding her predicament. The affair creates no talk and causes no surprise — small wonder! — for every woman there is in the same trouble.

What has become of the old ladies? Years have passed since I have had the good fortune to look upon one, and it would be worth a long journey to

see one again. To be sure, the world is full of women — an excellent thing, by the way — a most satisfactory manifestation of divine favor. There are grandmothers too, and it is to be hoped there always will be. There are all sorts of elderly women and oldish women and women of uncertain age ; but what has become of those dear, old ladies, so sacred to memory — venerable saints, whose whitened hair, smooth combed, is crowned with dainty caps — beloved grandmothers in whose busy fingers knitting needles click and flash in tireless labor of love ? Will we never see their like again ?

There is a pathetic side to this, what may be called the decadence of the old lady, which may not appeal to all. I know that to many it is not a decadence, but a transformation for which the world is to be congratulated. Women no longer grow old. Peach-like and distracting maidenhood gives place, in the course of years, to matronly middle age ; the fingers of Time trace wrinkles on once smooth and rounded features, hair whitens, hands lose their plumpness ; but further than this, the great magician is powerless. Women become grandmothers, but no longer old. Why should they grow old ? someone asks. Why should old age be set apart to wait and watch ? Why, indeed ? And yet — I love the old lady, with her cap and knitting.

I see her yet, as she sat, long years ago, in the ancient chair made sacred by that presence, like a queen upon her throne. I see the cap of black lace and dainty lavender ribbon, the “best cap,” put on for state occasions ; the kindly face, which every wrinkle made more kindly yet and beautiful ; those

consecrated hands, now folded in eternal rest.

Yes, she was set apart. Long years, well lived, stretched down the course of Time, and her face reflected the peace and happiness of Heaven, not far removed. The frivolities of the world were not for her. Apart from them, but not apart from the love of friends and the homage of her little court. We, too, will grow old ; we may — happy thought ! — become grandfathers and grandmothers, but who of us, having experienced that blessed relationship, having once known one of those not rare women, who grow old sweetly, can forget the grandmother of his youth. There may be yet, for aught I know, old ladies as dear. There are many grandmothers. Whitened locks surely need no added crown. Frizzled hair and jeweled hands may, perhaps, go with a grandmother's heart, but may we long cherish that vision of the dear old lady with her cap and knitting, her crown of years, and the ancient chair.

APPLES AND ROSES

I wonder if the apple which played so important a part in that episode of the Garden of Eden was anything like the apples at the present time which help to make life worth living for such a large part of humanity. If so, then must it be admitted, reluctantly perhaps, but positively, that the temptation was a great one. If the apple was a handsome, rosy cheeked pippin, and we had been present, I fear that not one, but a whole tree full of the fruit, would have disappeared before our newly awakened appetites. Far be it from me in this age of moral development to countenance stealing apples. That is never justifiable except, perhaps, during a bicycle trip, and even then its propriety is questionable. When a wheelman is tired and hungry and thirsty and a tree loaded with delicious, red fruit reaches its generous branches over the fence toward the weary wayfarer, then he is apt to forget his catechism and follow in the unfortunate example set by Mother Eve so many centuries ago. Indeed, there is a fine point in morals involved in the operation. Do not apples, which overhang the public highway, if they be ripe and good and fair to look upon, belong to the public? The oft quoted incident of the Garden of Eden is by no means the only time apples have figured in the world's history, although perhaps, the most far reaching in its consequences. Was not a great war brought about because of the presentation of an apple to fair Helen of Troy? A falling apple suggested the law of gravitation to Newton.

But no one cares today whether apples have figured in history or not. We love them for their own sake. Eliminate from the harvest time all other fruits — grapes and peaches, to think of which makes one's mouth water ; yes, take out the water-melon and its sweet sister, the cantelope ; the apple alone is sufficient to gladden the year, to crown it with a glory which penetrates not only to the hearts but, what is more to the point, to the stomachs of mankind. Without apples man might, indeed, exist, but much of life would be taken away. The apple is the most sociable of fruits. The melon is better eaten alone ; when consuming an orange, man earnestly desires to sink from sight or retire from mortal gaze ; but the apple ! Its ruddy cheeks tell of the glow on winter's hearth, when family and friends gather at the fireside in sweet and joyful communion of spirit. Some one leaves the group for a moment and returns with a dish heaped up with apples. There is comfort and pleasure for you. Jokes fly faster, conversation is more brisk, enjoyment more keen ; merrily fly the sparks up the chimney and cheerily sputter the apples before the transforming blaze. Through apples hospitality finds ready expression. In days of innocent childhood which solicits and receives with gratitude a gift of the core ; in the halcyon days of youth when our sweetheart intersperses her favors with delicious Baldwins, rubbed till they shine like her own rosy cheeks ; in toothless old age which scrapes the apple and enjoys it none the less, does this wonderful fruit minister to the happiness of mankind.

Strange as it may seem, the apple belongs to the

great rose family. By what accident or process it developed into a sturdy tree and came to rock its young in such a delightful cradle of lusciousness can only be imagined. It is thought to have been indigenous to Northern Russia in remote times, and its cultivation spread rapidly throughout the temperate zone. America is the great apple producing country today, but we are not alone in the cultivation of this popular fruit. Apples are grown in Europe, South Africa, Northern India, China, Australia, New Zealand. From the original wild crab of Russia, the fruit has developed until today there are several thousand distinct varieties and few bad ones in the lot. In 1890, in North America alone, there were over two hundred forty million apple trees growing in nurseries. The American apple has become a great favorite abroad. We export hundreds of thousands of barrels every year and many of them find their way to England. The English people know a good thing when they see it, especially when that good thing is something to eat. It is interesting to note that red has no terror for Johnny Bull. Red is the national color. He wants red apples and lots of them and the red pippin is his favorite.

Think of thousands of varieties of apples and the multitudinous forms in which they may be eaten and digested. Think of apple jelly, apple butter, baked and boiled apples, apple sauce, even dried apples, and surely there is no harm in thinking of cider, and the old cider mill which was the delight of childhood days. The apple in an uncooked state is not very digestible, says one authority. The apple should be eaten just before going to bed, says an-

other. The skin should never be eaten at all, says a third. What do we care? The way to eat an apple is to eat it, and if it distresses you, be happy in the thought that you die in a good cause. The pippin, says science, is composed approximately of eighty-two parts of water, ten parts of sugar, less than one part of free acid and five or more of albuminous substances and salts. But what enjoyment is there in analyzing an apple, except by the natural processes of the stomach? Can science with all its learning make an apple? And can any amount of water and sugar and acid console us for a failure of the apple crop? Not if the great American people knows itself. The apple may be a rose, but is it not greater than a rose? Beautiful as she is, the garden rose need not blush for her cousins, the first pink tinted apple blossoms of early spring; graceful as is her foliage, there is no place for hammock and swing beneath her friendly branches; no chance to revel in grateful shade, and the chief glory of the greater rose remains to be spoken — the apple.

THE HARVEST MOON

I have been wondering while noting the unusual number of midsummer weddings, how many of these can be attributed to the unquestionable influence of moonlight. The effect of the moon on sensitive natures is something astonishing. And when we come to compute the immense floods of moonlight which bathe a city during two weeks of a harvest moon, imagination stands appalled at the possibilities. But the moon means well, and at the risk of being thought sentimental I would like to speak a good word for her. I sometimes think poor, frail humanity does not deserve the blessing of a moonlight night in summer. Yet, if we never received more than our deserts life would be indeed barren. To see the moon rise majestically in the east and hang in the heavens like the Eye of God is an experience which cannot be described, only felt. If it were not so common and free, all the newspapers in the land would straightway fall to describing the phenomenon and it would be the talk of the town for weeks.

Science tells us that night is absolutely necessary to the physical existence of man. Even so is it to the soul. For in that flood of radiance, issuing as from Heaven, making the darkness beautiful, we are led from a world of turmoil and struggle and imperfection and heartache into the ideal. Far away seem the shop and the office and the store. Time stands still and the universe waits while humanity catches up. All this may not pass through our minds as we look out into the moonlight, but it

enters the soul, though unconsciously, as we begin to perceive somewhat of life's reality. I know not if it were for this that back there in remote ages our moon in some great tidal wave swung off from the earth's surface into space. I do know that the blessed orb not only influences the ocean, but causes tides in the soul that ebb and flow through life.

And so a few words do not seem out of place in appreciation of the wondrous moonlight evenings when "the cattle that lie on the ground seem to have great, tranquil thoughts", and how much more man? I really feel sorry for that person, no matter how great his worldly blessings, who can stand absolutely unmoved in the presence of such splendor. How insignificant seem the troubles and annoyances, the things of day, in thy presence, O Mirror of my Soul! There is a serenity in her beauty that soothes. "Why fret and worry?" she says, "I know all about it. Before man was I began to circuit the heavens. I have seen all the struggle from the beginning, and yet the day dawns. And as far in the future as imagination can penetrate shall your remotest posterity see me shining, even as you see me now."

There is a different world at night. We stroll up and down familiar streets; all is changed. We seem in a new land. The toil of day is hushed. The houses of the neighborhood have an unfamiliar look. The moon rests lovingly on them like sunshine photographed. Trees are revealed as masses of foliage. We can not discern details, save where some dainty branch is outlined against the moon-lit sky. Not a leaf is stirring. The trees seem asleep. Earth is

asleep. Time is asleep. Alone with the night is the silent watcher — alone with the great, visible, audible, palpable night, which like some living presence broods over the world. We are in a region of enchantment. Tomorrow's sun will kiss this sleeping beauty and restore all things to life again. To fully enjoy the night one should be alone. Then is trouble forgotten and the peace of all nature pervades and assures the soul. Political boundaries, party, creed, disappear and one becomes a citizen of the universe, a worshipper in the universal church.

Sound, too, comes under the spell of the enchanter. How different are the common sounds of day when heard at night! The crowing of cocks, the sleepy twitter of birds, the moaning of some restless tree, the barking of dogs in the distance, the subdued rumbling of far away trains, all seem a part of night itself. The footsteps of some unseen pedestrian mingle their ghostly sounds with the rest, pass and die away in the distance.

But, after all, the real night is lighted only by stars. A moonlight landscape is wondrously beautiful, but when night blots out all landscape, and trees and houses become as darker shadows, then are one's spiritual eyes opened and the soul sees God. Darkness which shuts in the body releases the spirit and we soar through space. At night man rises to his greatest height and sinks to his lowest depth. He is imprisoned by day. That canopy of blue holds him down to earth and the things of the world. At night the curtain is lifted and the majesty of the universe stands revealed. How immeasurably more remote is the nearest star of night than

the broadest of day's horizons, though viewed from a mountain top ! Countless suns look down from infinitude and search out his heart. How man shrinks and shrivels under their steadfast gaze ! What are wars ? what are political intrigues, in the presence of such vastness and glory ?

“Tell me what you feel in your solitary room,” says Amiel in his incomparable Journal, “when the full moon is shining in upon you and your lamp is dying out, and I will tell you how old you are, and I shall know if you are happy.” Which seems another way for saying that we can find only ourselves in nature. She sits in judgment upon us. Like the Fairy Godmother her real self is visible only to kindred souls. After all, is not he richest, who is in tune with nature ? For him she puts on her richest robes, to him she reveals her greatest glories without money and without price. Her moon shines as beautiful on us as on lands far distant and scenes we have vainly longed to visit.

SOME AUTUMN WEEDS

IT is perhaps but another illustration of the great law of compensation that weeds, the bane of spring-time, man's great enemy in early summer, should become so picturesque a feature in the autumn landscape. How persistent they have been since the sunshine and rain of April first called them forth. How they have evaded the toiling gardener and grown unseen. Defiant to the last, they no longer skulk but, proud as the stateliest, take full possession of forgotten nooks and hold high their fearless heads. One can not help admiring them.

Chief among these autumn weeds, if it be not sacrilege to thus class a plant so beautiful, is the goldenrod. This popular flower so rich in color has many poor relations who are heartily despised — rag-weed, beggar-tick and the rest — but we must not hold goldenrod accountable for their misdoings. Rather let us take off our hats to him for teaching us that fine surroundings, fine clothing, fine family, while excellent and desirable, are not essential to fine living; for in spite of his lowly birth and poor relations, goldenrod makes the world brighter and is much loved. He is the greatest of the wild flowers; there is hardly a section in the whole United States that is not warmed and cheered by his sunny presence. Of the eighty known varieties, only one is found in the Old World, one or two in South America, one in the Azores and the rest in our own America.

A fine characteristic of goldenrod is that it flourishes where aristocratic flowers would perish. Gol-

denrod is a philanthropist, visiting the poor and needy. He was the originator of the social settlement. His blossom plume itself is a whole colony. Wealth may enjoy him, but it must search him out — must go into the highways and byways and lay siege to him. The poorer the soil and meaner the surroundings, the richer and more cheerful seems his life. This flower, or weed if you like, is found, not in the gardens and lawns of culture, but by the humble cottage, along the railroad track, by the country fence, in all sorts of queer and out of the way places.

Goldenrod and railroads seem to have an especial and unreasoning affinity. This autumn weed avoids the main line of traffic, but search along some little used "branch" and you will find blossoms in abundance. The ugly track and road bed are often transformed into a fairy land of gold. A stroll through such enchanted regions is something to be remembered — every foot of the way lined with green and yellow, goldenrod and its pretty cousins, coreopsis and rosin weed. A weed which can make beautiful a railroad right of way needs no further recommendation. It is indeed a public benefactor.

Its nodding, golden plumes are the forerunners of autumn — a suggestion of that blaze of glory in which our summer season goes out. It is a voice which cries in the wilderness — a bit of nature that makes us all brothers. From the fair haired girl who gathers her apron full of the feathery blossoms, to the stately lady in her carriage and the workman whose weary way is brightened by the living sunshine, we all rejoice in goldenrod. How graceful are

the plumes. How they contrast with the green of the meadow and the blue of the sky. See them shine against the whiteness of yonder cloud. How they adapt themselves to circumstances. Remove them to the parlor, the mantel, the school room, they are just as beautiful and seem not out of place. What debt does not humanity owe the great aster family, whose blossoms, beginning with the earliest dandelions, down through the goldenrod season to the dandelions again who flaunt their lions' teeth and golden crowns in the face of Old Winter himself, leave hardly a month in the year not brightened by some of the relatives.

What shall be said of the thistle, that other cousin whom all mankind seems to despise? How persistently he crowds himself in where he is not wanted. How he resents interference. If the thistle were rare, I'll warrant we should all be cultivating the species assiduously, grumbling the while because the grass would creep in and choke the prickly fellow. Late in summer he lifts his head above the pasture fence and seems not a whit ashamed because he does not make good hay. What cactus equals the common bull thistle, either in foliage or in richness of blossom?

"Look at me, if you like," he says, "admire me if you can lay aside prejudice long enough; but hands off if you please."

Nature seems to have a greater love for her children who are despised of men. In early autumn, this same blossom lets loose a myriad of winged fairies. They penetrate even into the city. How they sail and sail as if superior to earthly attraction.

School children pause to blow the little creatures high in air ; busy men make frantic grabs at the atmosphere in vain effort to detain them They duck and dodge and float, as beautiful and fleeting as Autumn herself.

ON KINDLING A FIRE

IN the month of harvest festivals and other ceremonies in honor of the ripening year, there is one important function, quietly performed by every householder — an annual sacrifice, as it were, to his Lares and Penates — which merits a festival all its own. I refer to the kindling of the annual fire which is to burn throughout the season of frost, like the sacred flame in the olden temple guarded by vestal virgins. Vestal virgins must have been built on a different plan from the average virgin of modern times or it would have been necessary to rekindle the fire at least thrice each week, to the utter scandalization of the gods and ruination of heathen theology. In those days of evil omens goodness knows what would have happened in the event of so dire a calamity. Even at the dawn of this enlightened Twentieth century letting the fire go out is an infallible sign of various things which need not be mentioned. Dignified matrons sometimes insist that they, and they alone, know how to handle a stove — which no man cares to dispute as long as they are willing to exemplify the theory. Yet it seems clear, without insisting on the matter at all, that the problem is one for mature manhood, a Christian and a philosopher, to grapple with. Be that as it may, the lighting of the annual fire is one of the most important and significant events of the entire year.

Not more pleasing are the first balmy days of spring, when all nature calls us away from the home into the woods and fields and gardens, than

the days of the first fire of autumn. The delicious warmth permeates the whole body until it glows with delight; under its expanding influence the very heart swells and we feel at peace with all the world. The making of the first fire holds no terrors for the householder. That which afterwards grows irksome and is approached with reluctance, oftentimes profanity, is a matter for pleasure and congratulation. No one begrudges the coal heaped on that first fire; no one objects to splitting the kindling. The whole process becomes of itself a celebration in which the entire household takes part. The stove has been set up and blackened until it shines and smiles at the thought of long, cozy evenings when it will be "the whole thing," so to speak. All this is horrible drudgery which it is well to delegate to other hands whenever possible, but necessary before the poetry and philosophy of the sacrifice can be made manifest in the actual kindling of the blaze. How cheerless the house seems in those hours prior to the great event. A chilly reception and an uncomfortable family await the home coming of the husband and father and awaken in him a total disregard for the almanac. What cares he for coal bills and accumulating ashes? He even smiles as he seizes the axe and soon comes in with arms full of kindling from the shed.

Surrounded by the now beaming faces of his loved ones, who stint neither advice nor encouragement, a layer of paper is placed in the fire pot; small sticks of kindling wood are criss crossed on top, then larger kindling. A hod of coal rattles merrily down the magazine, each piece hurrying to be

the first to feel the transforming blaze. At length all is ready for the enkindling match. Here is a moment unique and tremendous in its significance. Civilization with all its ramifications, our complex social life, grew out of such a moment. Philosophy and science and family affection await in thoughtful silence the striking of that match. Slowly the paper ignites, the blaze quickens, with a roar of glee and expectation fire surges through the well-laid sticks. The coal sparkles and snaps and sends out bluish flames as delicate and ethereal as imagination itself, of which they are the material counterpart. The stove actually takes on new expression. It gazes out into the room through a score of glowing eyes, the very embodiment of good cheer.

"Come one, come all," it seems to say, "gather around, my children. Enjoy me while you can ; for more than all else do I typify the centralizing, glorifying, joy-giving affection of the home."

And the various members of that family gather around, rub their hands with satisfaction, perform kindly acts for one another. They love God and humanity and each other better because of that fire.

I know that stoves are going out of fashion. Many of us use furnaces, steam or hot water, but what we gain in convenience we lose in poetry, unless, indeed, we can afford that supreme pleasure, a grate fire. The decadence of the stove is something on which one cannot look with entire indifference, although he may not regret the change. Registers and radiators promote comfort but they do not appeal to the imagination. They have no character or expression. But the stove is yet the great centre

around which family life revolves in the winter season.

The stove making industry is a great one. Thousands of handsome heaters are turned out annually, proud and dignified, as if conscious of their superiority to their ancestors. If we could only follow those stoves into the homes of the Nation, into the centre of the home circle, what secrets would we not learn, what joys witness, what heartaches! They will be present when a new soul enters the household and when "mortality takes on immortality." Loving couples will hug close to those stoves on cold winter nights, discussing the future by the fitful glare while the very fire sparks in sympathy. Bridal couples will stand for a moment before the stoves, then go out from the dear, old home. And when Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year's bring their era of cheer and good fellowship, how lovingly those stoves will beam on the company and dispense comfort and hospitality.

PLAYING WHIST

ONE of the most refreshing things to contemplate these troublous times is the calmness and serenity with which the modern city club devotes itself to whist. What if there be wars and rumors of wars? The city club is oblivious, and cares not a whit as long as it has a strong hand and a good partner.

It is said that Napoleon slept on the field of Waterloo; but Napoleon had not the honor of belonging to a city club. Had he been a member of some famous organization, he never would have slept. Far from it. He would have proposed a game of Memory Duplicate to the Duke of Wellington and settled the whole controversy without bloodshed. More than that, he would have beaten the Duke and changed the face of all Europe. For your city club man, be it said, is no ordinary whist player. Is he content to sit down to a quiet rubber by a blazing fireplace? Not a bit of it. That kind of amusement may do for old ladies on whose hands time hangs heavy, but the city club must organize itself into whist battalions and engage in sectional strife. The North and South arrays itself against the East and West and no quarter is given or asked. He is not content with a happy-go-lucky sort of game, interspersed with coffee and apples and sociability; he makes a business of the fun. The man who wins is the best fellow and the unfortunate who makes a misplay deserves the rope. Ordinary people can sit down to a game of whist and then forget all about it. Not so with the players of

the city club. The game lingers in the memory. They run up to the club rooms the next morning and look over the score. They meet on the street and learnedly discuss how certain cards should have been played at the contest several weeks before. Their very conversation takes on a mysterious whist flavor.

These city club players never have to ask what is trump, like the rest of us, and they never guess at a play. When they lay down a card it is after mature deliberation and the act has a deep significance. It sometimes happens that no one but themselves can comprehend just what the significance is, but it is there just the same and must be considered.

Happy city club, which looks on life in a rational way! Fortunate business men who can shake off the cares and drudgery of office, store and factory, and far above the clouds, so far that not even the faintest sound of work day strife comes to their ears, engage in these mimic battles with which nature loves to restore lost energy! So many of us regard life as such an intensely serious matter — a sort of perpetual funeral at which we are the chief mourners. Life is not a bowl of gruel to be partaken of sparingly and condemned as unwholesome if it so happens that the soup be palatable and of good flavor; neither is life all pie, of which each should strive for the largest piece regardless of nightmare and stomach ache. Rather is it a complete meal, which, no doubt, is an important affair, yet not serious, so long as the larder be full and the digestion unimpaired. Let us have a few social condiments along with the roast beef of existence; and when it comes

to dessert, so essential to a good dinner, what more delightful than whist? Roast beef is all right and not to be despised, but a little of life's pie, if you please.

Whist is much like life. Players look upon whist, in spite of the fun, as quite a serious matter after all. The less a man knows about the game, the more highly he values his own opinions, which is not so different from some of life's phenomena. The inventor of playing cards is the world's creditor to a fabulous amount. If only we knew his name, or at least his nationality, what a monument we would build to his memory. But who and what he was, where he lived, when he accomplished his remarkable invention, are lost in the darkness of antiquity.

Many nations claim him. By some authorities he is thought to have been very ancient and of eastern origin. It is even said that in their primary stage cards constituted some sort of symbolic and highly moral game. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, you who scorn the device and blush at the sight of the Queen of Hearts, or the smallest suit in the pack. Cards are supposed to have originated from the ancient and highly respectable game of chess, although when and how printed cards took the place of carved figures is a matter of conjecture. One authority insists that cards were invented in the latter part of the fourteenth century to amuse an insane king of France. Now, here is something which seems reasonable. That they are specially adapted for the amusement of insane people, has been demonstrated time and time again, from that day even unto this. At any rate, the French clergy

took greatly to cards about that period. Whatever the origin, cards have become an almost universal form of amusement, an innocent one, except in the abuse. We have whist conventions, national and international ; whist professors, who charge a good, round fee for instruction ; whist tournaments. Several noted players have died while at their favorite game. It is greatly to be feared that should Gabriel blow his trumpet on the evening of the regular play, the city whist club would insist upon finishing the game before responding.

THE OLD HOME

ONE of the great pleasures reserved for maturity and age is a visit to the old home, the scene of childhood's careless, unconscious joys. The old home! What mingled sensations of happiness and pain the thought awakens in those who were not deprived of nature's priceless heritage, a happy childhood. Those crusty curmudgeons, who one could swear were never children, are to be pitied. They have missed much of the sweetness of life. Yet, perhaps down deep in even their little hearts lingers a tender memory, unacknowledged and concealed in the accumulated rubbish of years. The emotion with which one looks on the home of his childhood has no counterpart in experience. It stands alone—the tearful present gazing at the past, idealized and glorified and made visible. A sacred tenderness fills the heart and wells from the eyes.

The old place means so much more to you than to anyone else, although thousands pass daily and have done so for years. How little they know of what they see. How little any of us know of what is passing before our eyes. What meaning to them has yonder stone from which your feet used to dangle in the old days, or the big maple which speaks to you with all the suppressed eloquence of a quarter century, the nooks and corners about the yard, the very walls and angles of the house? They shout their message to you. None else can hear. People cross the continent to see those hills which skirt the village where you used to play, but they are not their hills. Strangers may look and admire. To you

the living, pulsating spirit of Nature herself is revealed.

On approaching the old home, a thousand memories and images crowd and jostle together in mind and heart. As the once familiar landscape unfolds before your rejoicing eyes, the horizon of the past broadens to your mental vision. Yonder is the great ledge of rocks, eternal as the hills; in the distance, the old mountain, cloud capped, which perhaps overlooked your home. On that corner you commenced your school days. See! The stump of the huge elm under which you used to play! And there, at last, is the old house — the same, yet how different! What a mighty rush into the past as each familiar object comes within your vision! You are a child again. The same, yet how changed! Strangers dwell within those walls and you may not enter save by permission. But who could withhold consent?

A word of explanation and the door swings open. With a mist before your eyes and a choking in the throat you cross the threshold and gaze in silence on the dead. The old fashioned hall! The sitting room where you used to rest on mother's knee! The quaint, old mantel! How proud the day when you could stand beneath it and touch the shelf with your shock of hair! Where is that hair now I should like to know? And there, best of all and most painful, is the dear, old dining room, and you note, even through your tears, that the once lofty ceiling is within reach of your upstretched arm.

You rush out of doors to hide your emotion and stroll about the town and hillsides, recognizing and calling by name people of whom you have not

thought in years. There is a strange look about the place. It has improved, they tell you. Perhaps it has in a material way, but you resent the improvement. It is not the place of your dreams. Is it an improvement for vandals, under a plea of ownership, to strip the mountain of timber until the venerable peak looks like a plucked fowl? Does it improve the town to cut streets through your old play ground? What right has anyone to build a high board fence around the hill — your hill, because you loved it? These purse-proud aristocrats would fence in the very air if they could and build a wall around Heaven itself.

But the cemetery gate stands open and within is peace and quiet and stability. A few added mounds and stones to mark your sorrow does not change the city of the dead. Here are your friends, and here, your welcome.

It is genuine pleasure to look up the few who are left. They have not forgotten, and together you live over the old days and discuss the friends of long ago. And where is Sadie, you ask, as a sweet vision arises of a baby girl who with gurgles of delight was wont to come to you from her mother's lap and throw her chubby arms around your unworthy neck. How her dimpled childhood is linked with your past! Why, Sadie is married. What trick is this that Father Time plays on his children? Girls have such an unaccountable way of growing up. But it is true. Sadie herself blushing in shyness tells you so and she ought to know. Such strange transformations are wrought by a few fleeting years. It makes you feel like a grandfather to see the child-

ren of the old days married and with families of their own. One is never so conscious of his increasing years as when some superb woman brushes past him with ribbons flying and a rustle to her garments which makes his ancient heart beat young again. Why, he remembers when she was born. He used to take her in his lap and rock her to sleep. Now ! In her presence a strange bashfulness comes over him. He wonders what to say and finally takes refuge in the weather. Blessings on thee, weather, thou unconscious saviour of bashful men. Whether thou dost pour down rain or scorch the thirsty earth with an August sun, we could not carry on conversation without thy presence.

WINTER'S HERITAGE

WHO has not felt the indescribable charm of sitting before a blazing fire on a cold, Sunday afternoon with a good book for company? It is a selfish enjoyment, perhaps, yet none the less delicious. In such hours, the consciousness that misery exists somewhere out in the cold seems rather to heighten the sense of personal comfort. Wough! How the wind blows, dashing an icy spray against the window panes. Never mind; it is warm and cozy within. Stir the fire until the sparks go roaring up the chimney, like the hopes and ambitions of youth. Their cheery warmth enters the heart, filling it with sweet content, almost ecstasy. This enjoyment of one's fireside is the most precious heritage of winter. As spring calls us into the fields and woods, where nature, awakened from her long slumber, is all smiles and gladness; so winter drives us, nothing loath, to the fireside, the society of friends, the delightful companionship of books.

This is an enjoyment that cannot be monopolized by wealth. It comes to all healthy natures who have homes to enjoy. We cannot draw the line and say, on this side is happiness; on the other, misery — that certain conditions will give contentment and others, wretchedness. For happiness is not altogether an abstract thing; it is relative in its nature. The room is equally warm in summer, but we do not feel the same delicious sense of comfort. Happiness is often the effect of contrast. The discomfort which we know exists out in the wind and snow makes us responsive to the influence of the fire. The

very contrast fills our hearts with content, and out of content comes happiness.

We see the poetry of things indoors that in spring we look for in woods and fields. The singing of the tea kettle on the fire may seem discordant in summer; but now, listen to its music, which harmonizes with every mood. If we are merry, the kettle brims over with laughter. It gurgles and chuckles and holds its steaming spout aloft with a jaunty air, as if to say, "Here is enjoyment for you — loving hearts and a warm fireside. Let winter do his worst, he can only make us feel our comfort the more deeply." If we are sad in spite of all the cheer, there are tears and tenderness in the quiet song, which soothe our wounded spirit until we smile. Then the saucy fellow breaks forth in music which there is no withstanding, for he sings of home and love — the great fountain heads of human happiness. As beauty is said to lie in the eye of the beholder, so happiness is not so much in externals as in mind and heart. Influenced by outward conditions, it reacts on them, and they grow more beautiful and harmonious. Yet, as far as outward conditions can cause happiness, a cozy fireside on a winter day is ideal.

To get the best effect we should have the visible presence of fire. Radiators and registers are all right in their way. They drive out the cold and minister to our material comfort, but they only suggest fire; they are no more fire than is a letter from a dear friend that friend himself. Registers and radiators do not kindle the imagination. There is strong resemblance between flame, visible manifestation of fire, and imagination, invisible manifestation of intellect.

What the one is in the world of mind, the other seems in the world of matter. It is not surprising that when the flame of intellect burned low man worshipped visible flame. Kindled by some stray spark of thought, imagination leaps up and seizes upon dry facts and experiences with which the mental store house is filled. Lo, they become new creations. So flame takes matter in its ethereal embrace, until it burns and glows and ministers to our comfort, to life itself.

The snap of the burning coal, the muffled roar and fitful glare of the flame, set the fancy free and turn back the years. The book sinks unheeded in the lap and we revel in the fields of memory. With what relief we turn from the clouds and storms of the present and bask in the sunshine of the long ago ! The world may owe no man a living, but it certainly owes to each and every one a happy childhood. A sad thing it is that the debt so often goes unpaid. The idle moments are not wasted when we thus wander through the invisible realms of experience, culling here a thought, there an inspiration ; again, some sweet forget-me-not, planted by dear hands long folded in eternal rest and watered by our tears ; or in the visible world of nature, we pluck the fair flowers of earth and draw inspiration from field and forest.

So, we sit by our fireside and read and think and drink deep draughts from the sparkling fountains of memory, do brave deeds and build our castles of air, unmindful of time. What a rare old magician Time is ! How different from the remorseless tyrant that he is usually pictured. His tender touch ideal-

izes our joys, until they glow with ever increasing brightness unto perfection, as bluffs along a stream take on new beauty when seen from opposite banks. In his magic crucible, pain is forgotten ; our sorrows become sweet memories which live with us through the years, softening our lives, enlarging our hearts, bringing us more closely in touch with God and man.

ON GROWING OLD

THE general passenger agent of a great railway system recently issued me a ticket over his lines, in which was punched, after the manner of general passenger agents who seem suspicious of their kind, my apparent age, sex, size and color of my hair. Now, I maintain that it is bad enough to mutilate so good a thing as a railway pass in this diabolical, rogues' gallery sort of fashion. Yet, I could have forgiven even that, for honest people can afford to laugh at suspicion and with all its shortcomings the individual conscience is the final test of one's acts. I could have forgiven such a confession of lost faith in human nature, had I not in an evil moment looked at the description thus punched in the offending card, because of which may the general passenger agent himself be punched, not four, but eight times ! For, instead of reading that the holder of the pass was of commanding presence, with long chestnut hair and a mien both youthful and innocent, I beheld only four short words — four baldheaded, unfeeling words, full of frost and vinegar : namely, "male", "short", "middle aged", "gray".

I don't know when I have received so great a shock. There was another, not long ago, the memory of which is more vivid than the events of yesterday, when a youngster at school screened himself from the missiles of a companion behind my proud frame. "Huh !" jeered the belligerent, little rascal, "you have to hide behind a big boy." Ah, the sweetness of those words ! A "big boy !" I could have

smiled had he hit me. It was a great shock, but how different ! I remember, also, only a little while before, of receiving that tremendous shock, from the delights of which girls are forever excluded, putting on the first trousers and strutting around for the admiration of all creation. But that again was different. I take no exceptions to the first descriptive word used by the general passenger agent, for I have always understood that to be the case and, indeed, have never denied it. But, "short !" O, infamous agent ! If I were not short would I be seeking railroad passes ? But why proclaim it to an unsympathetic world ? Why call the attention of cold blooded railway conductors to so distressing a state of affairs ? Worse yet, "middle aged !" And worst of all, how can I frame the word ? "Gray !" O, these soulless corporations, soulless because of their perpetual youth ! And O, that grim joker, Time ! I am almost certain the Old Fellow stands at my elbow as I write, grinning and chuckling and feeling the edge of his scythe ! What have I to do with time, I whose soul is steeped in eternity ?

Life is full of these rude awakenings. Time is a cunning workman and no man can detect his joints. No one can say that here ends youth, there begins maturity and over yonder is old age. We are here, and before we know it, by some mysterious process we have become big boys and girls and forty seems far off. We revel in youth and seemingly could live forever, and lo, middle age is upon us. Now, indeed, we begin to realize that life "is the stuff dreams are made of." But, after all, we are still that boy and girl. Age has simply shifted its starting point. Not

forty, but eighty, is now old. And almost before we can adjust ourselves to the new conditions and realize that youth is gone, that middle age with its whitening hair, its bald spot and other paraphernalia, is upon us, I imagine that great passenger agent, Time, will punch out "old" and pass us into the New Jerusalem.

It is startling to watch the years slip by although we seldom note their passage except in the recurrence of one of those anniversaries known as birthdays — those days in which we are born again, so to speak, into fuller life; to which children look forward with such pathetic eagerness; on which maturity catches its breath with a little gasp, makes a hasty survey up and down the hill of life, looks into the glass thoughtfully, perhaps takes advantage of that diabolical arrangement of two mirrors, wherein one can view the back of his head — something plainly never intended for him to see. The back of the head! O, wretched sight, to make angels weep! Is that the back of my head? Away with looking glasses and other cheats of time and let us grow old in peace!

Still, it is a good thing to look into the glass occasionally, not vainly but in a philosophical spirit, that we may see the present before us and judge of the future. Better yet is it to look into that other glass, mirror, not of the present but the past — the family album. It is not strange that we sometimes shrink from the family album as containing the glorious promise of what we are the imperfect realization. Carelessly we finger the pages, not thinking that we are turning back the years of our life, until with something like a shock we suddenly see the

face of our own youth looking up at us. Wistfully we smile down at that hopeful, eager, smiling face, but our smile is tinged with sadness. That boy died long ago and over his dead body a man arose — a man, who, as he looks, longs to gather that boy into his arms tenderly, to shield him, counsel him.

Turn back the years ! With every page a year, with every year a tear ! The boy has disappeared and from the depths of the album — dare you look ? — stares the sweet face of an innocent child, a familiar face and yet how strange. Bewildered and shrinking in realization of your own unworthiness, you let the album fall unheeded in your lap as you live again your pitifully short childhood.

Where are these birthdays ? Where is our childhood ? Where is that great Past with its thousands of voices crying out through the years ? Suspended in memory and tradition ; crystallized in literature ; embodied in character. We, then, are the Past. In us it lives and walks and breathes and becomes the Present. And so without knowing it the babe grows into boyhood and the boy without knowing it takes on the form and semblance of manhood. Yet, he is a boy still. One of the most difficult things in life is for a boy to realize that he is a boy no longer, but a man, and for a girl to see that her youth has slipped away and that the responsibilities of womanhood are upon her. That boy feels himself the one exception in this universe of law. Time can take no liberties with him. The precise moment when the boy becomes a man can never be told, and happy is he who, not too conscious of the change and regarding life not too seriously, remains like Lowell, an “in-

corrigible boy," to the end of his days.

Somehow our individual birthdays are different from other holidays, especially as we seldom make of them holidays, but come to gaze upon them reproachfully and try to make light of them. It is not for us to interrupt the serious drudgery of life for so little a thing as a birthday. Yet, how infinitely more important is my birthday and yours than Washington's! For had Washington not been, someone else would have been raised up to be the father of his country. But, had we not been — ah, had we not been! — perhaps the world would have jogged along after a fashion, but the centre of the universe would have shifted; the perspective of life would have changed. We recognize the importance of birthdays in our observances — Christmas, the birth of Christ; Independence Day, the birth of the Nation; the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln. What are our wedding anniversaries but celebrations of birthdays when we took on the life of a new and sacred experience? In short, is not what we call life, one significant, astounding birth, from that remarkable and interesting phenomenon which we call baby, up through changing experiences, until at last from the mysteries and travail of an earthly existence, through death, we are fully born and awaken to the glories of immortality?

"Middle aged!" "Gray!" Well, what of it? Yet, this aversion to growing old is common to all. It is difficult to get away from the thought. Lamb in one of his essays rails at old age and death. Oliver Wendell Holmes in "Over the Tea Cups," that literary child of his old age, dwells much on these things,

sweetly, it is true, but the thought is with him. And Lamb is gone, Holmes is gone, and with them countless millions who have left not even a memory.

O, youth and childhood, we yearningly cry ; O, departed days ; O, the careless, happy years of long ago, with the sweet saints who peopled them and the sacred voices which still echo through the corridors of memory ! God help us, are they gone ? And yet, though we see with infinite yearning and compassion that childhood reaching up to us through the years, and though we strive and strive again to take hold of the little hand, not one of us, not one, would go back again if he could. For it is life we are after, not living, and life does not consist in perpetual youth or even in middle age. These are but parts of life.

Years bring experience, and experience, wisdom, and wisdom is eternal. In the realms of wisdom and love there is no growing old. Hair will whiten ; the fingers of Time will write the soul in the once smooth features of ourselves and dear ones, and science and superstition will search the globe for the fountain of perpetual youth. These things must come to pass. Yet, this fountain will be found, if found at all, by introspection. Why search the universe when it is ours for the asking ? In wisdom and its soul harmony called character, in knowing the meaning and purpose of life and loving the true and the beautiful in all things, there may be found youth which is eternal.

Here ends the book "The Bashful Man and Others," as written by Charles Pierce Burton, and published by Langworthy & Stevens at The Blue Sky Press, 4732 Kenwood Avenue, Chicago. Completed in October, 1902. Of this edition five hundred copies have been printed, this being number 278.

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